# Florida WILDLIFE

Fishing · Hunting
· Conservation ·
Outdoor Recreation

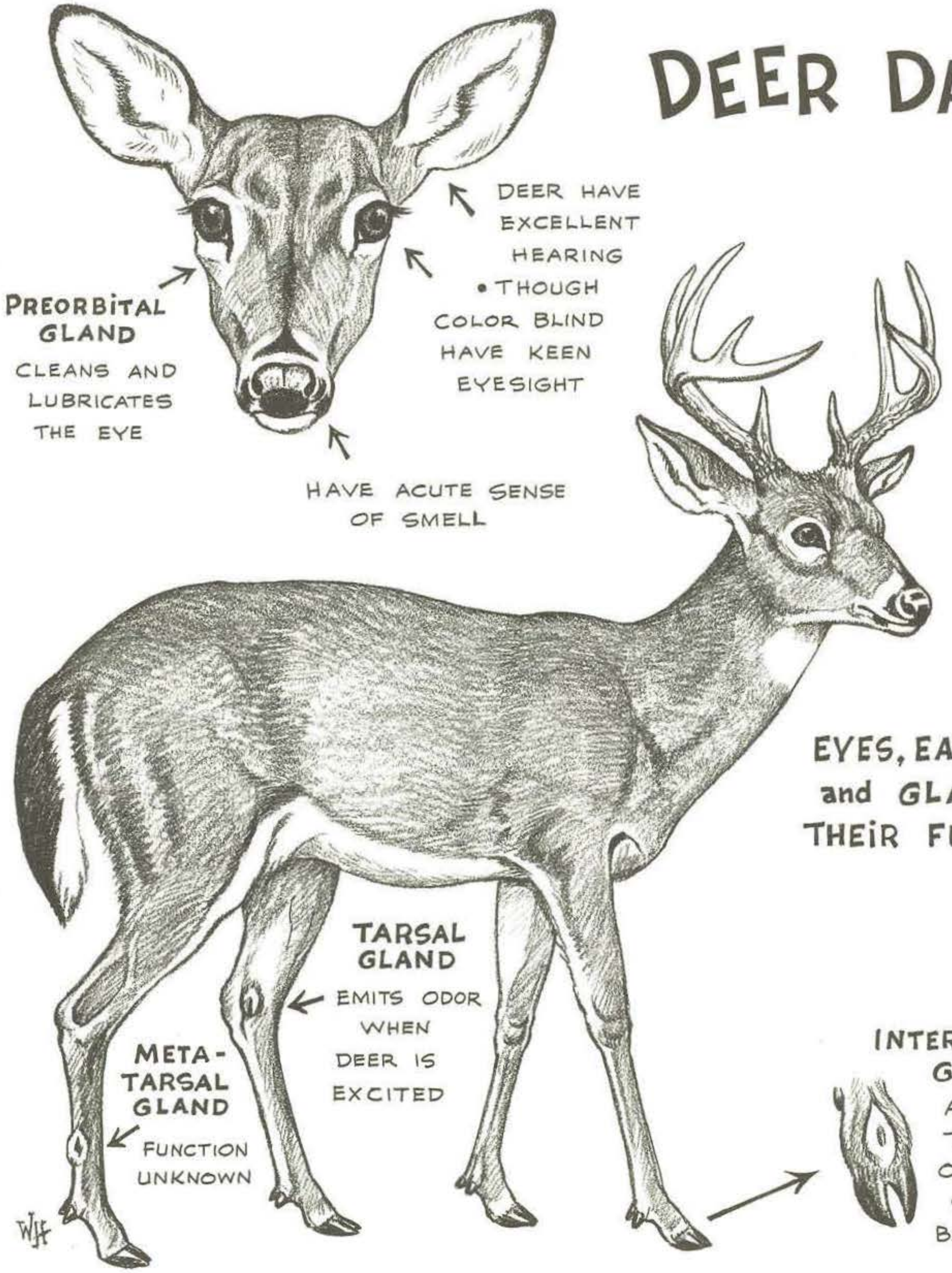
FEBRUARY 1974

*The Florida Magazine for all Sportsmen*

35 CENTS

Hunters' Repentance
Urban Wildlife

# Florida Wildlife Scrapbook



## DEER DATA

DEER HAVE EXCELLENT HEARING • THOUGH COLOR BLIND HAVE KEEN EYESIGHT

**PREORBITAL GLAND**
CLEANS AND LUBRICATES THE EYE

HAVE ACUTE SENSE OF SMELL

**EYES, EARS, NOSE and GLANDS and THEIR FUNCTIONS**

**TARSAL GLAND**
EMITS ODOR WHEN DEER IS EXCITED

**META-TARSAL GLAND**
FUNCTION UNKNOWN

**INTERDIGITAL GLAND**
AIDS IN TRACKING OTHER DEER • OR FOR BACKTRACKING

*FLORIDA WILDLIFE MAGAZINE • FLORIDA GAME AND FRESH WATER FISH COMMISSION*

# Florida WILDLIFE

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★

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*No woodpecker is any busier, any noisier, or any happier to be alive than the Yellow-shafted Flicker, which you might know as the yellowhammer or just plain flicker. It lives in town and country, and spends much time on the ground. See page 19.*

**From A Painting By Wallace Hughes**

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when sportsmen live up to
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usually happen

# Hunters' Repentance

By **JIM REED**

A DEER HERD can and will bounce back if given a fair chance. This has been proven in many other states as well as in Florida.

It is natural for a deer population to fluctuate. However, if it is managed properly and the hunters kill only legal deer, the trend should be for the population to gradually increase until the carrying capacity for the habitat is reached or even exceeded.

If the herd is allowed to increase after the carrying capacity is reached, several things may occur. The animals may become stunted. External and internal parasites might attack the deer, and the effects could result in sick animals that would not reproduce. Extreme conditions could even cause death. In the case of a die-off, the herd is usually reduced far below the carrying capacity of the area.

The Florida deer herd has not reached the desired peak, except in some few isolated areas. Die-offs have been very limited. It is believed the illegal hunter's gun has played a big part in reducing the deer population in the areas that have had an excessive reduction in the herd.

The Richloam Wildlife Management Area is one example of a tract that has had an up and down deer herd over the years. This area is located in Sumter, Lake, Pasco, and Hernando counties. It is part of the Withlacoochee State Forest (as are the Citrus and Croom Wildlife Management Areas).

When the Richloam Area was first opened to hunting, during the 1954-55 season, hunters from the neighboring counties were about the only ones who used the area. There was little concern about deer populations among hunters. "Camp meat" was a must. If a buck couldn't be found, then a doe was sacrificed for the table. As time passed, more hunters from surrounding cities migrated to the area, and were likewise unconcerned about anything but their own pleasures in the field.

When the local hunters realized the deer were getting scarce and they were having a difficult time even finding a deer track to run, they called on the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and the Florida Division of Forestry for help.

The Game Commission started a restocking program on the area, and the Division of Forestry stepped up its controlled burning program to improve the habitat. Some positive results occurred from these projects, but most of the results were nothing more than psychological experiences.

Central Florida deer hunters, faced with decimated herds, thought it over, and met the problem head-on. They organized, began policing their own ranks, and are now able to see positive results: Once again, they have deer to hunt.

Photo By Leonard Lee Rue III

By 1968, the deer herd had dwindled to a trace. This could not be blamed on management practices, poor habitat, nor excessive legal hunting pressure. The fault was right back on the hunters' shoulders. They had destroyed the reproductive potential of the Richloam deer herd by careless or planned (whichever the case) shooting of the does.

Then, in January 1969, a big meeting was held in Sumterville, with hunters, Forestry people, and Commission people in attendance. Many sound ideas were exchanged at that meeting, and people left knowing there was a major problem. They vowed to solve it.

Local sportsmen organized and were named the Sumter Sportsmen's Association. They felt an organized group could go in one direction to a conclusion instead of getting enmeshed in a hodgepodge of ideas and proposed projects.

Sportsmen, especially the Sumter Sportsmen's Association, vowed to protect doe deer by cooperating with law enforcement, and to stop all illegal hunting among their own ranks. They visited other hunt camps in the area and tried to educate the hunters on the values of obeying hunting laws as a game management tool. Their efforts paid off, and the reward has been better hunting for everyone.

In the 1972-73 season, hunter pressure on the Richloam Area almost doubled that of the previous year. There was fear that the pressure would destroy the deer herd, but the illegal kill was negligible. There again, the club's activities paid off. On one occasion, a club member caught a hunter with a doe, and detained him until the wildlife officers arrived and took over. On another occasion, a group of hunters turned an illegal hunter in for a doe violation.

The large number of hunters last year, by shooting only legal deer, apparently did not hurt the deer herd.

"The season just past was undoubtedly the best we've had at Richloam since it was opened 20 years ago," says an enthusiastic Billy Merritt, of Bushnell, president of the Sumter Sportsmen's Association since it was first organized. "Hunting pressure was even greater in '73-74 than it was in '72-73, so naturally we'll be looking closely at next season's harvest."

The illegal kill again was almost nonexistent, so the Richloam deer herd should continue to increase, unless some unexpected factor arises before next November.

Another Richloam hunter and club member said, "The Richloam Area is a model of hunter repentance."

Dade City hunters, and others from nearby areas, also played a tremendous role in making

(*Continued on next page*)

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the Richloam Area a model area. They too vowed to stop illegal hunting and to educate other hunters. Now, when these people hold their annual litter cleanup days in the Richloam Area, you can see some of the worst outlaw hunters of yesteryear right in the middle of the pack, loading cans, bottles and other assorted garbage, and hauling it off to the dump.

Other public hunt areas have had similar experiences. The Ocala National Forest Wildlife Management Area started building a large herd right after the screw worm was eradicated in the early sixties. In 1969, the herd was estimated at 12,000 animals. Illegal hunters shot it down to an estimated 2,000 animals during the next couple of years. Many of the illegal kills were left on the ground to rot unless a wildlife officer happened to find them soon enough to salvage the meat and give it to some institution.

Again, hunter concern brought about a series of meetings which resulted in severe restrictions being put on the hunter, at his request: one-deer season bag, a special $10.00 permit good only on the Ocala Area, and no dogs the first nine days, for example.

Far too many clubs were involved in the Ocala project to name; however, they combined to be called the Central Florida Hunter Council.

Increased law enforcement and better law enforcement techniques helped, but since the hunter shot the herd down, only the hunter could bring the herd back. The Ocala herd is not back at this time, but it is on the increase again.

An intensive population study was conducted last summer and fall by Richard Harlow and Ben Sanders, both wildlife biologists for the U.S. Forest Service, and Carlton Chappell, wildlife biologist for the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. They found the deer population in the Forest to be approximately 7,800 animals.

The Citrus Wildlife Management Area had a fairly stable deer population, and was producing in excess of 100 deer per year for the hunters. Archers had their season, and then gun hunters had a limited season with a limited number of hunters for each hunt. Suddenly, the herd dropped from an estimated 1,200 animals in 1968 to 600 in 1970.

There was no organized club effort involved; however, individual hunters took it upon themselves to change their attitudes and restore the herd. At the beginning of the last hunting season, the population was estimated at 1,200 animals.

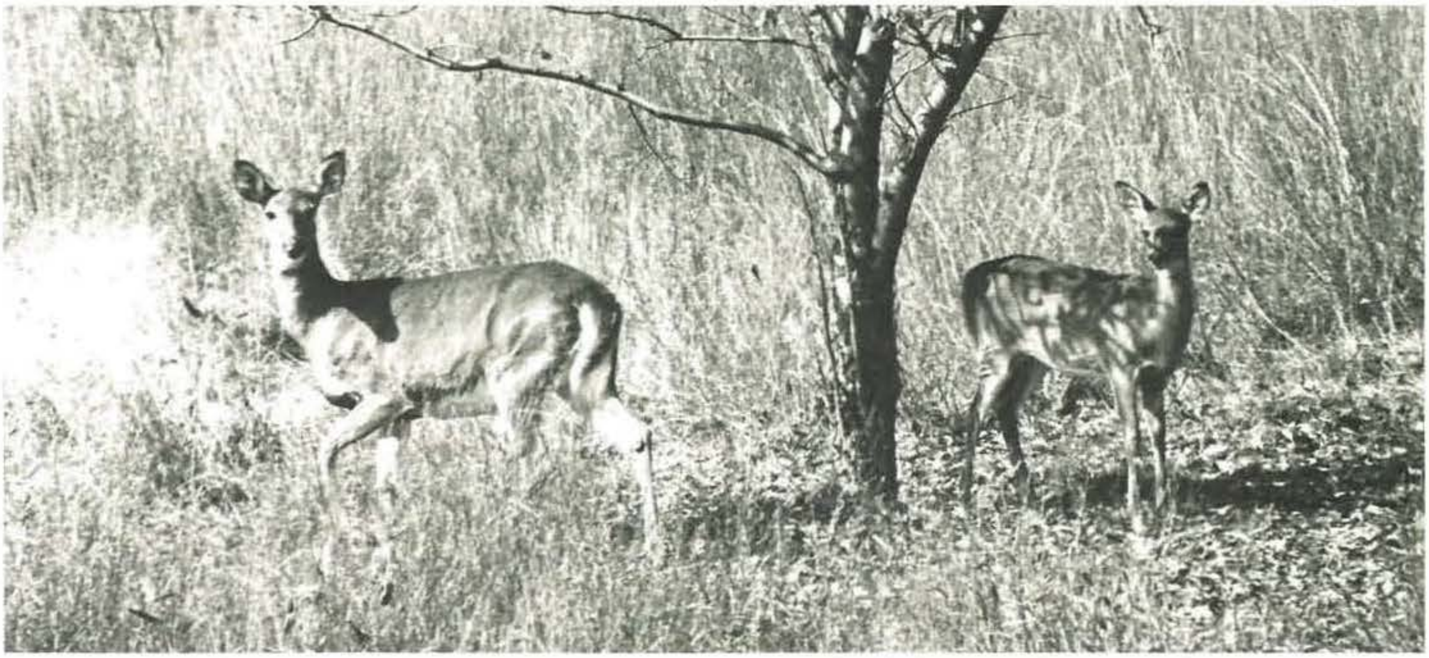
Saturation law enforcement effort might apprehend a hunter after he has killed a deer illegally, but it cannot keep the hunter from pulling the trigger on a doe or yearling—unless an officer is close enough to jerk the gun out of a would-be violator's hand before he shoots. The hunter alone can stop illegal deer killing.

Stiff penalties such as have been imposed by the courts help curtail illegal kills, but again, are not the whole answer, because before the case goes to court, the animal is usually dead and gone forever.

There will probably come a time when we will need a controlled doe hunt on these areas if the hunters' attitudes continue as they are now, but that time looks a long way off. ●

**The evidence at Richloam and neighboring wildlife management areas indicated serious game law violations involving shooting doe deer. Thus, the breeding stock was lost. Now, they're back.**

Photo By Leonard Lee Rue III



# "Sporting" Competition

**going after fishing and hunting records can become so important that the rules get temporarily suspended—all in the name of sportsmanship**

By CHARLES WATERMAN

I HAVE LONG BEEN mystified by the efficiency of all kinds of straight-up-and-down jigging. The jigs themselves may be fishy looking, or crabby looking, or shrimpy looking, but if there are any living creatures that hop straight up and down near the bottom, I don't know about them.

This seems to have no bearing on the way all sorts of gamefish sometimes gulp jigged baits in preference to all others. I got a dose of that late last fall at Lake Obregon, down in Sonora, Mexico. It's a 20-year-old impoundment that's full of largemouth bass. The lake was formed amid arid mountains covered sparsely with mesquite, greasewood, and a variety of clawing and stabbing cactus plants. Those mountains are formed in startling shapes, especially apparent at dawn and dusk.

The impoundment was built for irrigation use, and its edges vary from shallow, gently-sloping cove bottoms to sheer underwater cliffs. The depth varies greatly, making Obregon a mecca for addicts of the fathometer and bass boat.

Those bass are mainly fairly deep feeders—not unusual in impoundments—but I thought I was about to teach them some new tricks when I caught one with a popping bug at the dock before the serious fishing started. After that, they proved to me that popping bugs do not live in Lake Obregon. Spinner baits and underwater vibrating plugs took some fish, but plastic worms seemed best of all, no surprise to impoundment fishermen. (When fishing got pretty slow, I had a chance at white-winged doves, and missed more than I knew existed.)

But this jigging business: Charlie Gray, the outfitter, did it with a plastic worm. Call it "doodlesocking" if you want to, although that term has been applied to other methods. He simply lowered his lure to the bottom area and jigged it up and down. Gray, who has gone fishing before, once caught and released 47 bass of more than 5 pounds in a single half day on Obregon. His jigging method beat everything else on our last day.

This business isn't as popular in Florida fresh water as in other areas, simply because we have much shallow water where jigging isn't appropriate. It's still about the most productive of all salt water methods for a variety of fish of all sizes. Where stickups exist in southern impoundments, some anglers actually hang on to a stump and slide the lure up and down against it, especially in chilly weather. The jig-and-eel combination is a favorite, but some do it with spinner baits and almost anything else that will sink.

The up-and-down jigging works beautifully with crappie when there's deep water alongside brush piles or brush patches. That's a sort of miniature of the method Joel Arrington has demonstrated for me offshore of Cape Hatteras. Up there the rod was pretty heavy, the jig was usually sweetened with cut bait, and it took a tightwire walker to remain upright on the bouncing deck of a drifting cruiser.

Maybe the theory is mainly one of fish preferring a lure that is "falling back." When jigged, the lure is falling back half the time, and that's when the strike is most likely to come. You get more fallback per minute by jigging than with any other method, whether it's a 10-inch speck or a 40-pound grouper. The strikes aren't too dramatic, the lure simply stopping, and I have socked a hook into many a submerged stick while crappie fishing.

For panfish a light line can be helpful because it offers little resistance to the water and lets the bait go down quickly, even when there's a bit of

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Ed Roe of Jacksonville looks at a Lake Obregon bass from Mexico. He caught this one on a plug, but worms seem to be the most productive in fishing for bass.

*(Continued from preceding page)*

current. In some salt water operations, as in strong tide, only a fairly light line will get the thing down at all. With large diameter line, the lure simply swings out downstream, and even with a perfect combination you may have to throw upstream to get down. Most jigging is done with both reeling and the rod tip, and stiff rods are a help when the hooks are big.

Casting accuracy isn't important, and that may take some of the fun out, but jigging gets fish. George Radel, one of the best casters I know, says there are times when he can get more snook that way than by any other method when working deep holes in mangrove rivers.

---

THE QUICKEST WAY of acquiring a stiffer fishing rod is simply to cut off the tip, but you're likely to overdo it. In nearly every case the amputation needed is less than you'd expect. Many years ago, I ruined a soft fly rod by hacking off too much, and it turned from a weeping willow into a boat pole. I believe it was only about 6 inches I cut, but that was 4 inches too much.

There's a move toward stiffer casting and spinning sticks because of the popularity of plastic lure fishing, which requires muscular hook setting—and the same goes for much live bait fishing.

Not long ago, I was faced with a black bass trip while sojourning in a land of trout fishermen. I sadly went out to buy one more plugging rod, since there wasn't time to have one sent from home, but there didn't seem to be anything in stock I thought I could use. There *was* a nice rod intended for steelheading, but the tip was quite soft, built for feeling the delicate bumping of a bobber lure on the bottom. It was 6½ feet long, and I decided to attempt an amputation. When it had been whittled to 6 feet, it was just right for my purpose, and as good as anything I had at home. It doesn't always work out that way. You'll save some agony if you take off the tip an inch at a time.

Rod manufacturers may scorn such procedures, but many actions shorten satisfactorily, and the same blank may be used for several different rod models through judicious cropping at either end or both.

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AS THE YEARS WEAR ON I am more and more in favor of power tilts for the heavier outboards, even though there are special handles to make manual tilt easier. Many power tilts are built to give you instant control over motor angle, and the ideal angle can change frequently due to the type of water or the kind of boat load.

Outboard motors have long had it in for me anyway. Some years back I heaved up a motor to clear something off the propeller, and while I was laboring, with the power head in the pit of my stomach and most of my weight out along the tipped-up lower unit housing, the damned thing decided to go back into the water. I went with it—part way.

I clung desperately to the power head and propeller, and when the prop went down I found myself with my feet in the air and my head submerged in the water. I had a choice of letting go and taking a swim with my billfold, eyeglasses and all of the things I stuff in my pockets—or drowning.

Just as I decided drowning was impractical and that I'd let go, my wife grabbed my ankles and tipped me and the motor up together. At intervals during the rest of that day I heard muffled giggles from the other end of the boat, and the motor somehow managed a smug expression. I believe it was then that I began to consider power tilts.

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COMPETITION MAY DEVELOP sportsmanship part of the time, but it isn't always so. I keep thinking of the soccer-crazed mob that lynched a referee in Argentina some time back. They hanged him.

I also think of how Leo Durocher became famous and high-salaried by spitting on umpires' shoes and using four-letter words when close decisions went against him. And there is my friend the football coach who says he violates the playing rules when he can get away with it, especially when it's possible to cripple an opposing star. Although I know it's an unpopular belief, I take the position that deliberately injuring an opposing player outside the rules is the same as having him mugged in an alley.

Fish and game records are worthwhile as a part of wildlife study, but they can become so important as to encourage dishonesty. Some of the bigger frauds are pretty well known among those closely associated with specific sports. There is the world record mountain sheep head that allegedly was bought from a Canadian Indian by a prominent U.S. "sportsman" and entered under the sport's name; and another bagged by a camp cook (who had no hunting license) and appeared in the record book for a client.

Right now I'd better state that I am not leading up to the nose-to-nose bass tournaments. I may be on the outside and naive about those fish-for-money set-tos, but I've heard few rumors of cheating. They seem to be pretty well policed by the contestants themselves.

There are other kinds of contests which certainly don't teach sportsmanship. I know of one resort city that stages an annual half-day big-fish contest for considerable dough and with a nominal entry fee. The contest is held on water that isn't designated until the last minute. A friend of mine is a perennial judge.

It is quite common to find sinkers or stones in

**Debie Waterman fishes the Firehole River in Yellowstone National Park. New park policies put premium on sportsmanship. As a result of this, the fishing is improving!**

a submitted fish's innards, and the contestant may argue loudly that fish *do* swallow stones from time to time. But such little ploys are amateurish compared to the really technical efforts. There's the one in which a big baitfish is crammed into the entry's gullet, and who can say whether he really swallowed it or not?

Then there's the one in which the contestant gets a big fish beforehand and stakes it out where he can get it easily on the day of the competition. Some of the entries aren't handled that skillfully. Partly frozen or decomposed fish are common problems for the judges. Some of them don't even look like the fish that come from the contest waters.

And in the season-long contests, usually involving very little prize money but a lot of pride, there are all sorts of background innuendos about the winners. It is rare that I talk to a persistent entrant from one of those contests that he doesn't hint at foul play within the first 10 minutes. Then there's the guide or boat captain who's willing to sign anything if he can get his client a trophy or a badge.

I'm kind of cynical about sportsmanship. The great Ty Cobb had spikes that worked like steak knives.

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I AM INCLINED to agree with my old friend Buddy Nordmann, who says there's been less accent on sport and more on bringing home fish these days. Probably that's because there are more fishermen than ever before, some of them accepting a good score as the most important part of the whole thing.

But out in Yellowstone National Park there's a trend that's just the opposite. The park fishing is for trout, of course, and I'm inclined to feel that trout fishermen, aware that their areas for wild fish are shrinking alarmingly, are less inclined toward meat fishing than most other groups.

Well, anyway, the trout fishing was fading, and a few years ago the park fisheries people decided drastic measures were necessary. Somewhat fearful of a resulting uproar (after all, Yellowstone belongs to all of us), the park folks cut limits drastically, specified the most sporting methods only for many of the streams, and turned some water to catch-and-release only. Eight years of study had shown that fishing pressure was the main culprit in some of the river stretches.

But the public didn't scream. Only a few freezer fishermen complained at all. It now appears that Yellowstone National Park is about to become the best spot in the country for quality trout fishing. It's true that some anglers turned away from the catch-and-release streams, but many of those who have traveled great distances for encounters with persnickety wild trout are highly enthusiastic. The fishing is better, and no longer are park garbage cans filled with dead trout the catchers didn't really want in the first place.

Wild trout water is getting as scarce as Key West icicles. Yellowstone's may be with us when the rest is gone.

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I PROBABLY HAVE some cliches that drive you up the wall, but it ain't on purpose. Like you, I read quite a bit about hunting and fishing and I am tired of strikes that "nearly wrenched the rod from my hands" and of fish that always "lurk" instead of just swim around. I am tired of "smashing" strikes and I wish the word "hookup" could be retired.

I am even a little tired of hearing big bass called "hogs" or "sows." I'd just as soon call them fish as "gamesters" or "bruisers." I am a little tired of fish stories beginning with picturesque dawns and ending with colorful sunsets. I am sick of the promises to go back again for the one that got away. I yearn for a tale of a lake that has just ordinary fishing, and I would love to hear of a lure that works pretty well without being revolutionary. I would like to read of a fish species that doesn't fight particularly well but is fun anyway. I would like to know about a fly fisherman who doesn't cast 100 feet, and I am tired of secret spots repeatedly mentioned with smirking rhetoric.

But then I am sorry that we no longer have halfbacks who are simply fast. Nowadays most of them have "great speed" and all of them display "great second effort" the way ends have "great hands." But then all bird dogs "freeze" on points. I was a little startled when a setter's owner told me the other day that she scented birds and "died." He was at least trying to say it differently. ●

**a family's experiences with a displaced great horned owl they called . . . .**

# Hoot, the Freeloader

FEW OF US FACE the exact problem which George Harden had. How do you take a horned owl off welfare and make him hunt for a living?

It's not easy. It's kind of like forcing a 10-year-old boy to earn his own spending money when he's used to having it doled out to him.

The problems of George "Bubba" Harden began in the middle of February 1973 when he and Buck Folsom were scouting Lake Iamonia, in northern Leon County. Bubba is manager of a plantation and spends most of his time outdoors. But he wasn't quite prepared for the white owlet which tumbled from half way up a 100-foot pine tree.

Bubba and Buck had frightened a mama owl off her nest, and in her frantic liftoff she had apparently knocked one of the three owlets out. It was a fluffy ball of down about the size of a softball. When Bubba and Buck rushed over, the owlet was still, a claw and foot hooked under its chin as though its whole body had been shattered.

Bubba gently picked up the owlet and found it very much alive. A careful examination showed that nothing was broken.

Being experienced outdoorsmen, both men knew that wildlife young should be left alone. Their first decision was to return the owlet to the nest, but it soon proved impossible to scale the giant pine.

It was obvious that the owlet, estimated to be two or three weeks old, would die if left alone on the ground. Horned owls are protected under both federal and state laws and cannot be captured without permits. Fortunately, Bubba, who has cooperated with both agencies in wildlife studies, had proper clearance. If the owlet was to live, Bubba had no choice but to take it home and nurse it.

Perhaps it was not really an unwelcome imposition. Besides a house full of kids, his understanding and patient wife, Jill, and frequent visits from relatives and friends, Bubba maintains a menagerie of sorts. The star attraction is a 4-foot boa constrictor, kept content with an occasional mouse in its roomy cage on the front porch.

The inside feature is an aquarium with various fish swimming around a smaller tank in the middle inhabited by a colony of ants. If an ant tries to escape, it must swim. No ant has ever escaped from this Alcatraz. They're always picked off by the fish.

Bubba and his family also have two magnificent young bloodhounds, a Labrador retriever, Walker hounds, pointers, setters, several feist dogs, ponies and cats. One might understandably ask what difference it would make to add a horned owlet to this collection. Bubba soon found out.

The little glob of down was named Hoot. To this day, no one knows if Hoot is male or female, this not being an easy thing to determine unless you are another *Bubo virginianus* (the scientific name of the great horned owl).

Hoot's first home was the screened porch of the Harden residence. There was never any intention of keeping Hoot as a caged pet. All Bubba wanted to do was get him up to flying age and turn him loose to start making his way in life.

Hoot greedily took the first hamburger offered. Luckily, Bubba checked with a wildlife biologist on the dietary needs of horned owls. They cannot live on straight meat. Their peculiar digestive systems require bone, fur and hair to function properly. About 12 hours after eating these odds and ends, they regurgitate them in pellet form.

The great horned owl is not a carrion eater. The adult birds do their own killing, and owlets are fed fresh meat, along with fur, bone and feathers. As long as these requirements are met, a horned owl will eat anything from skunk to rabbit to hawk.

Since the hunting season was open, Bubba dispatched a squirrel. Hoot accepted it, but only after Bubba had cut it into small pieces.

*(Continued on next page)*

**By CHARLES DICKEY**

Photos By Steve Theg

Hoot had one big hangup, as Bubba Harden, left, and family were to discover as their orphan owl matured. He was insecure and overly dependent. He was nervous around strangers and didn't like cats or dogs; would watch them scornfully.

*(Continued from preceding page)*

Hoot would not drink water from a container so Bubba, assisted by his 13-year-old daughter, Millye, used a hypodermic syringe to make sure Hoot did not become dehydrated. For the next five weeks, Hoot took water this way—several squirts down his throat.

Young owls grow quickly. They are not able to solo until about 9 or 10 weeks old. Because of their rapid growth, they consume a great deal of food. Bubba had to go hunting for rats and starlings, both of which Hoot consumed with relish and impartiality.

Bubba soon learned that it is not always easy to walk out and shoot a rat on demand. While performing his work errands, he began to look for fresh wildlife killed on the highways by cars. Some days he would pick up three or four dead birds or small mammals, feed part to Hoot and freeze the remainder for future feedings. Even so, it was difficult to keep Hoot filled and contented. Bubba began to get the idea he was working for Hoot.

There was nothing shy about Hoot when he became hungry. He chirped frantically. It was a high, rasping pitch, about as pleasant to the human ear as a sawmill rip saw. It was insistent and demanding. Bubba sought the help of friends and they too began looking for automobile kills. The combined forces had all they could do to keep Hoot full and growing.

From the first, it was apparent that Hoot had adopted Bubba as his mother or father or both. Being only two or three weeks old at the time of adoption, the hungry Hoot had easily made the change in parents. As long as he had a steady supply of food, he was happy with his foster parent. He also adopted Millye as a parent or sister. Both Bubba and Millye could easily handle Hoot. The owl never made any attempt to snap them with his sharp beak or to tighten his talons when he sat on their arms. When others got too close, Hoot became nervous and excited. Sometimes he would hiss, and as he grew older he would snap his bill rapidly, clicking angrily as a warning. If he was on the floor he would sink low, spread his wings, and puff up, apparently trying to look huge and fierce.

For a while Bubba continued to cut Hoot's food into small chunks. As long as Bubba did so, Hoot was happy not to have to do any of the dirty work. But Bubba realized he had to prepare Hoot for liberation, the time when Hoot would have to do his own hunting and butchering. He refused to cut up the rats and gave them whole to Hoot. The owl had to rip up the food or go hungry. If there was one thing Hoot couldn't stand, it was an empty stomach. He dug in!

By April, the Harden family was anxiously awaiting Hoot's first attempts to fly, as the white down gave way to brown feathers. Working for an owl had begun to wear thin with Bubba.

Hoot was removed from his sanctuary on the porch and placed in a live oak tree. He didn't like it. Neither did he like the dogs which ran around the yard.

Hoot was forced into his education. He wasn't sure he was ready to move around a tree and fly, but Bubba urged him on. With the aid of a ladder and a pole with a small platform, Bubba continued to feed Hoot. The owl was not yet strong enough to fly and hunt on his own.

No one knows for sure when Hoot made up his

**He could make noise—snap his bill, hiss, and screech loudly—but nobody ever heard Hoot utter the typical 5-hoot call notes of a great horned owl. His flying lessons began at about 9 weeks of age and as soon as he caught on to it, he liked it a lot.**

Photos By Steve Theg

mind he could fly, but it wasn't long before he was making short flights. But being on his own didn't keep Hoot from uttering his loud screech when hungry.

If there were no dogs or strangers around, Hoot would fly down and land on Bubba's arm. Despite the warnings of family and friends, Bubba never wore a leather glove or arm sheath. Hoot, evidently still accepting Bubba as a parent, never gave him a scratch, although he'd tighten his talons if a dog came near.

When other people were around—and many came wanting to see Hoot—Bubba climbed to the top of a tool shed behind the house. Hoot would readily come to him or Millye, safe from the strangers and dogs.

Hoot didn't like the cats any better than the dogs. But as he gained confidence in his flying ability, he became more comfortable sitting above them. In fact, he began to look at them with disdain or disgust. At least that's the way Bubba interpreted it.

The final part of Hoot's education had to begin. The owl wasn't interested in going hunting. Bubba, although he had great affection for the freeloader, had to quit feeding Hoot and force him to hunt.

One morning Hoot was not around. He flew in late that afternoon, landed on the shed, and demanded to be fed. Bubba, the same as most parents, was so glad to see his child that he indulged him.

During this period in the summer, Hoot often disappeared for short times, but he still flew back demanding to be fed. Bubba didn't know if the owl was finding food in the field. He didn't want to feed Hoot. On the other hand, he was afraid not to, as the beggar might be unsuccessful in hunting.

Sometimes the owl would stay away for two days, then for three or four days. Hoot would return at dusk, land 50 or 100 yards from the shed, and look it over. He usually let out his frantic hunger chirping. If Bubba or Millye came out, Hoot would fly to them.

Bubba was in a quandary. He wanted the owl to learn to make his way in the world. Yet, when the owl would disappear for a few days, Bubba would worry about him. When Hoot returned, Bubba would try to give him at least a partial feeding. Hoot had to keep his strength up, and there was no way to know how much he was finding on his own.

I wish I had known then what I later learned about the great horned owl. After taking pictures of Hoot and interviewing the Hardens, I dug into the literature on owls at the library of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. I was quite surprised to learn that it was fairly common for adult owls to have to drive their youngsters from home. Long after the juveniles are fully capable of hunting and killing their own food, they are driven away and forced to make their own living. If Bubba had known this, I'm sure he would have felt better about letting Hoot go hungry so he'd be forced to graduate into the free world.

In autumn Hoot left for 10 days, and on another trip was away for two weeks. When he returned he had not lost all of his old habits. He chirped for a handout. Bubba was glad to see Hoot, but the freeloading had come to a halt. Hoot was getting to be a big boy, whether he wanted to or not.

In all of the time Hoot hung around the Hardens', no one ever heard him give the characteristic five-call hoot, or whoo. There were definite horned owl calls close by on many nights, but there was no way to be sure it was Hoot. He had a great range of calls to communicate, most of them for fear, anger or hunger.

Hoot left one night in late October and has not returned. The great horned owl in Florida mates in November or December. Bubba, missing his owl but glad it had matured, said, "My free food couldn't compete against sex."

Maybe Hoot will become a parent this year, either a mother or father. One wonders how Hoot will handle the problem when it's time to force his/her owlets to quit freeloading and make it on their own.

For many years to come, the Hardens will never hear a "whoo, who-who-who, whooo" without wondering if Hoot is out there in the great forest calling to them. ●

# Meet Your Commissioner

**RANDOLPH R. THOMAS, Jacksonville**

JACKSONVILLE BUSINESSMAN Randolph R. Thomas, 55, has been appointed by Governor Reubin Askew to a 5-year term on the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. He succeeds insurance executive James B. Windham, also of Jacksonville, whose term expired in January.

Commissioner Thomas is a native Floridian, born in Macclenny, where he grew up. He is a graduate of Baker County High School, and has studied economics at Jacksonville University.

Thomas has varied business interests. He is founder and chairman of the board of directors of MacDuff Appliances; founder and chairman of the board of the Amelia Island Bank, Fernandina Beach; is a member of the board of directors of the Southside Atlantic Bank of Jacksonville, Sav-A-Stop, and Associated Industries of Florida; and is owner of two large motels, a franchised Quality motor hotel at Titusville and the Airport Motor Inn at Jacksonville.

He is also part owner of Hidden Hills Realty Company, Jacksonville, and owns or has interests in various other real estate, including commercial rental properties, throughout the state.

Thomas is vice president of the board of directors of the Florida Retail Federation, and is a former 3-term chairman of the Jacksonville Port Authority.

He received the Sales and Marketing Executives Association's "Outstanding Management Accomplishment in Commerce and Industry" award in 1967.

His membership in civic and service organizations includes YMCA, Big Brothers of America, the Rotary Club of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Tourist and Convention Bureau, the Navy League of the United States, the Gator Bowl Association, the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, and the Committee of One Hundred. He was "Man of the Year" of the Propeller Club of the United States in 1969.

Thomas is president of the North Florida Chapter of the Leukemia Society of America, and a member of the national board of that organization, a work to which he contributes a good deal of his time.

Commissioner Thomas is a communicant of St. Marks Episcopal Church. His fraternal affiliations include Blue Lodge, Scottish Rite, York Rite, Red Cross Constantine, and The Royal Order of Jesters. He is Imperial Captain of the Guard, Morocco Temple, Jacksonville, and also a member of the Shrine of North America.

His hobbies are hunting and fishing—lifelong interests—and he particularly enjoys hunting big game in the western states.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas reside at 4185 Venetia Boulevard, Jacksonville. She is the former Olene Akin, of Guin, Alabama. They have a daughter, Barbara, who is the wife of C. Foster Wright, D.V.M., Jacksonville; and a son, Randolph R. Thomas, Jr., a graduate of the University of Florida Law School now doing postgraduate work in taxation at New York University. He is married to the former Anita Coffee, of Jacksonville.

"Having spent many years hunting and fishing, as a native Floridian, I am aware of the problems that confront today's sportsmen. My strongest endeavor will be to keep our conservation-minded citizens happy, particularly hunters and fishermen, while maintaining and upgrading the wildlife resources for generations to come," says Commissioner Thomas. "I also want to assist the staff of the Commission in achieving a stronger and sounder operational base. I am looking forward to the challenge of the 5 years ahead, and I pledge to contribute whatever I can toward fulfilling the trust that has been placed in me."

Commissioner Thomas' business office is at 2109 Gulf Life Tower, Jacksonville 32207. ●

# URBAN WILDLIFE

### By DAVID LAHART

FLORIDA IS BLESSED with a wide variety of habitats that support an unusual diversity of animal and plant life. The unique environment of the Everglades, a vast biotic community where man is a visitor, contrasts so sharply with the manmade environment that the term concrete desert is often used to describe our cities. Yet, despite the apparent bleakness of our metropolitan areas, many animals have adapted to life in our cities. To the asking eyes of a curious ecologist, a backyard, a vacant lot, or an entire city provides an excellent environmental laboratory.

Urban wildlife. Pigeons, rats and roaches are the obvious ones, and, indeed, they lend themselves to some interesting ecological studies. The humble roach, filling the role of scavenger, has been around planet Earth much longer than man. Rats play an important role not only in the ecological characteristics of a city but even in the history of man. Europe's infamous Black Death illustrates how man's future can be influenced by a lowly rodent. And who can measure a lonely person's joy at being surrounded by a flock of grateful pigeons?

Urban wildlife also includes a tremendous variety of animals that have lost some of their natural fear of man, and have learned to use man's habitat, the city, to their advantage.

The gray squirrel is such a creature. In the woods he is an elusive prize for the patient hunter, but in the city the same gray squirrel becomes an entertaining acrobat and most interesting neighbor. Such "citified" squirrels cause occasional problems, but who would want to rob urbanites of the opportunity of seeing such a fellow? I sometimes think bad thoughts toward the furry one who constantly steals my almost-ripe pecans, but by season's end I manage to harvest my share and consider his pilfering a small price to pay for watching his interesting family life.

The city squirrel's life isn't free from troubles. Predators continue to stalk him. Instead of foxes and owls, it's dogs and cats. The accident rate is high, and when urban squirrel population pressures mount, disease and starvation become merciless regulators. Over long periods of time, neighborhood or park squirrel populations might fluctuate from year to year, but as long as there are trees to support them, squirrels will continue sharing cities with man.

The English or house sparrow is a tiny finchlike bird. Once introduced to America, it found the rapidly developing metropolitan areas to its liking, decided to stay, and is now established in every major city in the United States and Canada.

Here in Florida, the house sparrow can be seen in small flocks bouncing around yards and parks. A shopping center is incomplete until house sparrows have established residence behind advertising displays and other handy nesting sites that modern building practices inevitably provide.

The starling is another European bird that was introduced into the United States in the early 1900's. Since then, it has spread across the country, and is a serious pest in many urban and agricultural centers. Starlings' habit of forming large roosting flocks makes them particularly obnoxious at evening time. However, the starling is a blessing when he arrives at an insect-infested lawn or garden to eat his fill of grubs, caterpillars, and other pests.

Because the starling is so aggressive and breeds early in the spring, many of the best nesting holes are occupied when native species finish the rituals of courtship and begin looking for a place to raise a family. Bluebirds, flycatchers, and even the prized purple martin are forced elsewhere, often to less suitable sites.

The scoresheet for starlings reads both good and bad, depending upon your point of view. Remember that man brought this animal here, and that the conditions man creates lets him thrive—even at the expense of some of our native birds.

Palm trees and the red-bellied woodpecker seem to go together. It's difficult to find a palm without a baseball-sized hole that characterizes this bird as a true urbanite. Its fondness for bugs and beetles is secondary to its love of grasshoppers, ants, and caterpillars. Red-bellied woodpeckers enjoy acorns and other vegetable materials, but their love of insects encouraged the Department of Agriculture to place it on the honor roll of helpful birds. The redbelly also provides a service to many other urban animals. Squirrels, screech owls, starlings, and sparrows all find their tree cavities most inviting, and make extensive use of them.

The holes may become avenues for insect and fungus infections that weaken and eventually kill the trees. Wind often breaks off the top where the trunk structure is weakest—at the woodpecker's hole. The palm tree stubs that dot Florida's cities are part of an ecological process of change-succession that remains incomplete because it occurs in a man-dominated ecosystem. Under natural conditions, another palm and another woodpecker would quickly take the place of the old. In the city, everything waits for the landscaping crews.

No city is without its army of ants. And while they may cause man some discomfort, they also perform valuable sanitation services. Ants are

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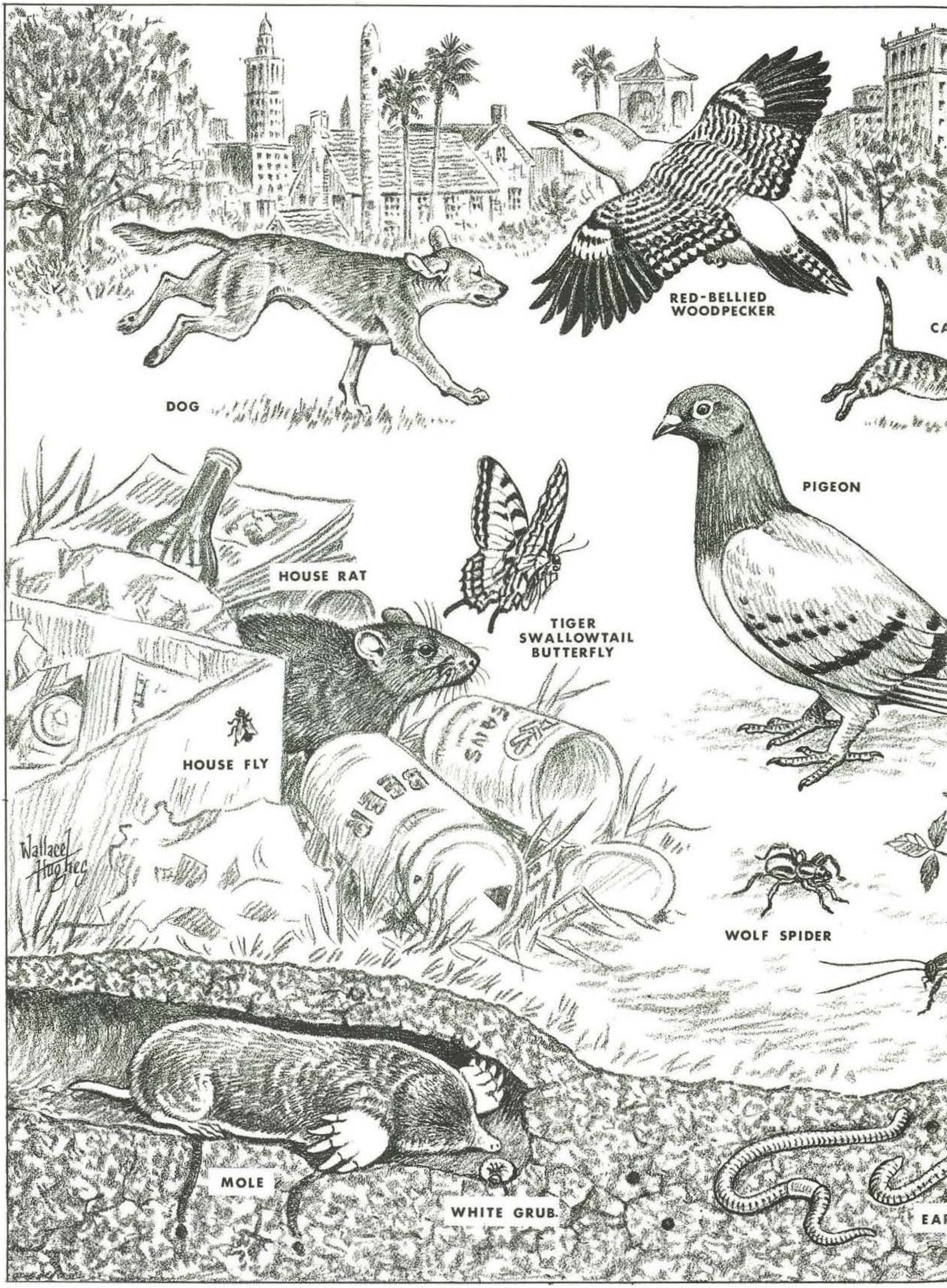
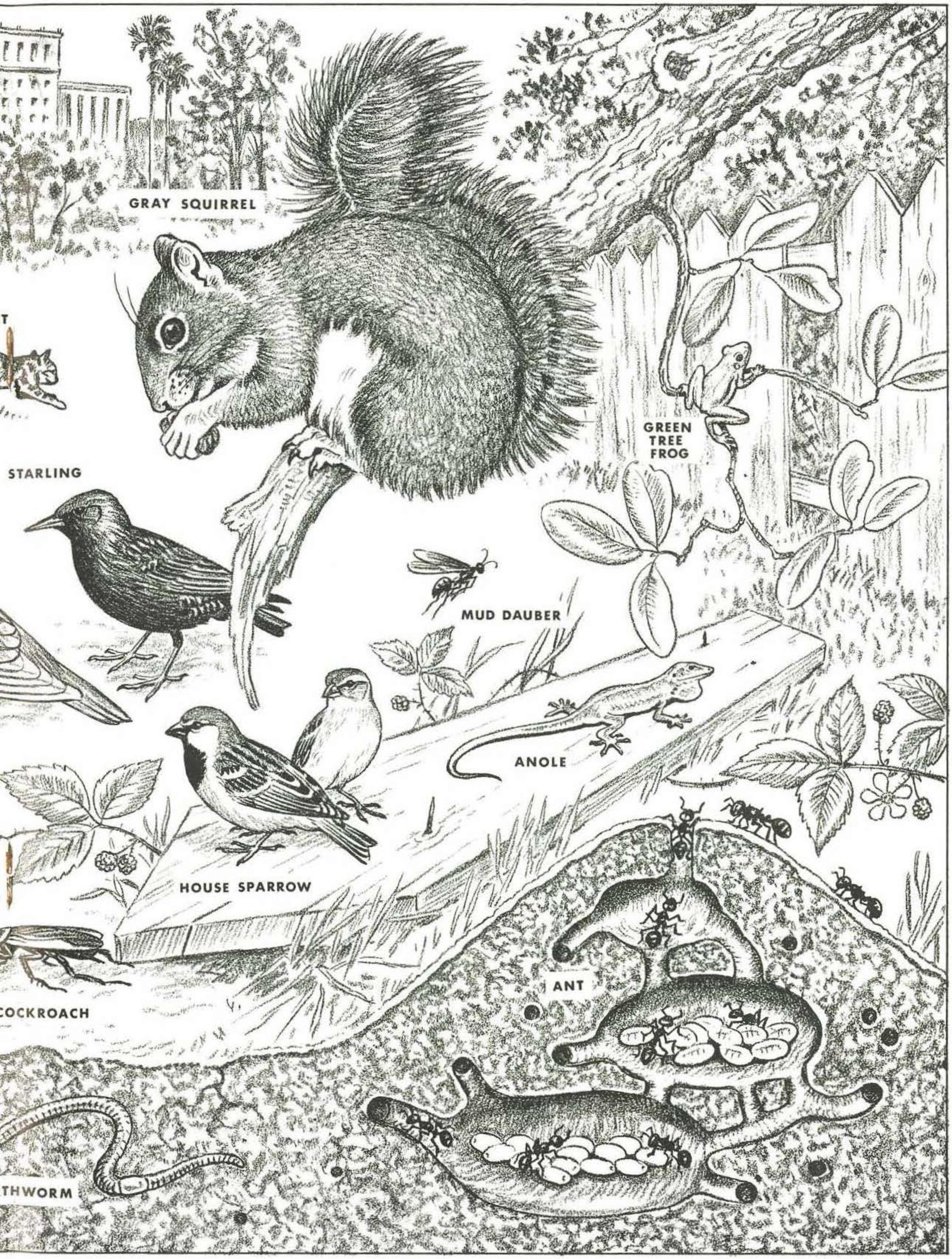

DOG
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER
CA
PIGEON
HOUSE RAT
TIGER SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY
HOUSE FLY
BEER
SAVINGS
Wallace Hughes
WOLF SPIDER
MOLE
WHITE GRUB
EA

Drawing By Wallace Hughes



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amazing creatures, and their life cycle and social ways have fascinated interested people for decades. Any naturalist who really knows an ant colony, gains a different perspective and appreciation for human life. Watch a colony of ants and see.

But insect societies cannot be compared to human societies, because the organization pattern of social insects is inflexible. No matter where you find a colony of red ants, they behave like all other red ants. The individual ant inherits its pattern of behavior. It has no choices. Individual humans have to make choices.

City ants function as an arm of the sanitation department, but they go one step further and recycle organic material. Animal wastes would be a tremendous problem in urban areas if it weren't for ants and a handful of other insects that move this rich fertilizer beneath the ground, where mold and bacteria reduce the compounds to simple elements—elements essential to plant growth.

Another animal that shares even the bleakest of human habitats is the lowly but valuable earthworm. Some people feel that worms belong on the end of a fishline, but their contribution to the care and conditioning of soil is more important than their help in filling a creel. Burrowing along, eyeless and toothless, worms swallow great amounts of organic materials, digest them, and expel the remains in the form of castings. These castings are five times richer in plant-available nitrogen, seven times richer in available phosphates, and eleven times richer in potash than the soil that was ingested!

Aristotle pointed out that worms are the soil's intestines, and while their eating builds the soil, their burrowing aerates it, permitting better water retention and root penetration.

Animals react to conditions in their environment, and even earthworms have inherited behavior patterns that help them survive. A worm has few alternatives when confronted with changing conditions. He can stay put, or he can move. As cities change, the environmental conditions for both humans and other animals change, and these changes can be positive or negative. The key difference is that man is rational. If he has the will and desire, man can plan positive changes.

Few urban lots or lawns are without a helpful mole or two. This animal makes an interesting lesson in adaptation for living beneath the ground. Moles have short, powerful front legs with turned-out palms and sharp claws. They have short, black or gray fur with a distinct silky luster and tiny hidden eyes. Their nests are usually deep beneath the protective cover of a large stone, tree or sidewalk. Moles are insectivores with a keen sense of smell, touch, and hearing, but they are practically blind. Mole menus include earthworms, grubs, beetles, and insect larvae. Many people destroy moles when they invade gardens or lawns, forgetting the valuable services they provide as insect exterminators and soil aerators.

Moles, earthworms, ants, beetles, and a host of other creatures make up a thriving animal community that is yours to explore without a long, tiring ride or expensive equipment. The animals found in your lawn can help you discover the fascinating ways they have adapted to man's environment, and the useful, free services they perform, if we let them.

Cats and dogs are examples of animals that man has purposely introduced into his environment. House pets are often scavengers, moving from garbage can to garbage can along definite routes, in territories marked by scent posts similar to those used by their canine ancestors, the wolves. Feral dogs may live together, bound by the same mysterious code as their wild relatives. In packs, they hunt and scavenge more efficiently, and are mutually protected. Stray dogs and cats often become their prey; squirrels and birds are constantly terrorized, but man and his table scraps form the vital link in the feral dog's food chain.

Man's houses and other buildings provide the habitats for many interesting food chains. Spiders, green anoles, and the always interesting tree frogs compete for flies, mosquitoes, and moths around most houses. The house mouse, a creature well adapted to urban living, is often joined by his cousins, the field mouse and meadow mouse, during the winter months when colder temperatures and lack of food make homes especially inviting.

Like it or not, a host of animals have managed to adapt to urban living. Some have always been there, and have simply changed their life style to adapt to a man-dominated community. Others have been purposely introduced, and found cities to their liking. Still others exist because man shares his food and shelter either intentionally or unintentionally. Some species of wildlife are adaptable and can coexist with man; other species cannot. If man, the rational animal, chooses to, he can provide living space for all of them.

The first step is to increase public awareness of urban wildlife and urban ecology. Once awareness and concern are established, we can bring the forces of natural systems to man's aid.

By controlling available habitat and food supply, we can decrease the populations of rats and roaches, or increase the populations of woodpeckers and earthworms. Urban ecology provides the understanding of urban systems, but political support is needed to begin a course of action to develop more interesting, more economical, and healthier cities for man. ●

**For reprints of this article, and more information on the environment, contact C. Richard Tillis, Environmental Education Consultant, Bureau of Environmental Education, Knott Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32304.**

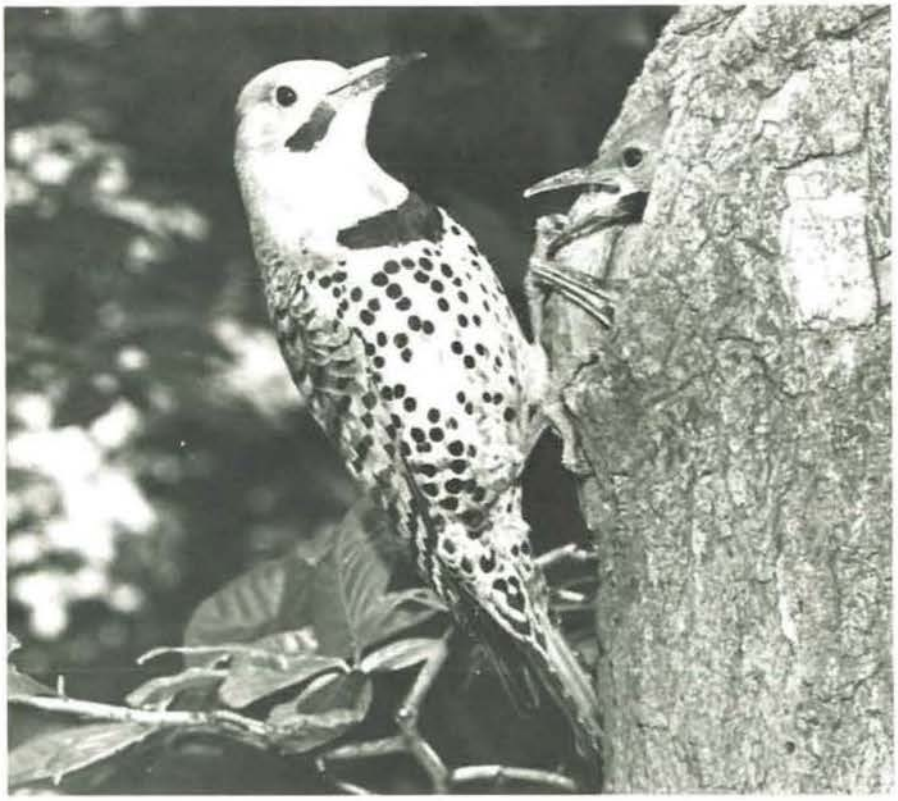


Photo By Leonard Lee Rue III

# the yellow-shafted flicker

### By J. E. HEIDENREICH

LIKE APRIL SHOWERS and May flowers—the harbingers of eternal spring—are the joyous *"yuk, yuk, yuks"* of the Yellow-shafted Flicker. Or it may announce its presence with a resounding drum roll on a dead branch. And it is not limited to drumming on trees, but quite often hammers away on a metal roof or a drain pipe. Its calls are also unlimited and varied, and are singularly unmusical.

This captivating, black-mustachioed bird is easily recognizable. It has a brown back and wings, immediately distinguishing it from all the other woodpeckers, which have black and white. The big brown-backed flicker is beautifully patterned. It has rich golden yellow feathers under the wings and tail, a large black bib across the upper chest, a red crescent on its nape, and the underside of its breast is polka-dotted in black. It has a white rump which is conspicuous when the bird is in flight.

The flicker is sometimes called the golden-winged woodpecker, yellowhammer, wickyup, and, because it nests in trees, the high-holer. The flicker has in excess of 30 popular names.

Like most woodpeckers, the flicker has a thick bill and strong neck muscles, and is arboreal. It clings to trees with its feet and uses the stiff tail feathers to brace itself. Once noticed, the flicker continues holding your attention with its straight-tailed, vertical climbing up and down trees. Its flight is wavering and "galloping," because it folds its wings completely against the body, and bobs slightly up and down, after one or several wing beats. One of the larger woodpeckers, the flicker may reach 12 or 13 inches in length.

Unlike other woodpeckers, flickers frequently feed on the ground. There it satisfies its craving for ants. It eats great quantities of these troublesome insects. Because of this ground-feeding habit, it is sometimes mistaken for the meadow lark. Flickers supplement their diet with wild fruits, berries, and various insects. With its rough, barbed tongue it has no problem collecting food.

As might be expected, the flicker performs an ostentatious courtship ritual. The male sends out his courtship message by drumming on a dead tree, then he struts on the ground and confronts his prospective mate. So that she may better view his varied feathers, he puffs out his head feathers, spreads his tail, and then does a shuffling soft-shoe dance before he undulates off in flight, with a loud cry of *"flicka, flicka, flicka."*

Flickers begin nesting in spring, anytime from March to May. They generally find a suitable tree and gouge out a hole for a nest. They have also been known to build their nest in a wooden fence post. The female lays 5 to 9 pure-white eggs, and incubation takes about 2 weeks. The baby birds are naked when hatched, but become downy within a few days. If they are disturbed in the nest, the young flickers hiss. Both adult birds share the nesting duties.

Some woodpeckers are residents in our area, but the flicker is migratory. Its range is as far north as central Alaska, and it migrates in early fall to the southern United States. It is fairly common and sometimes abundant in parts of northern Florida, but is less plentiful in the southern part of the state. ●

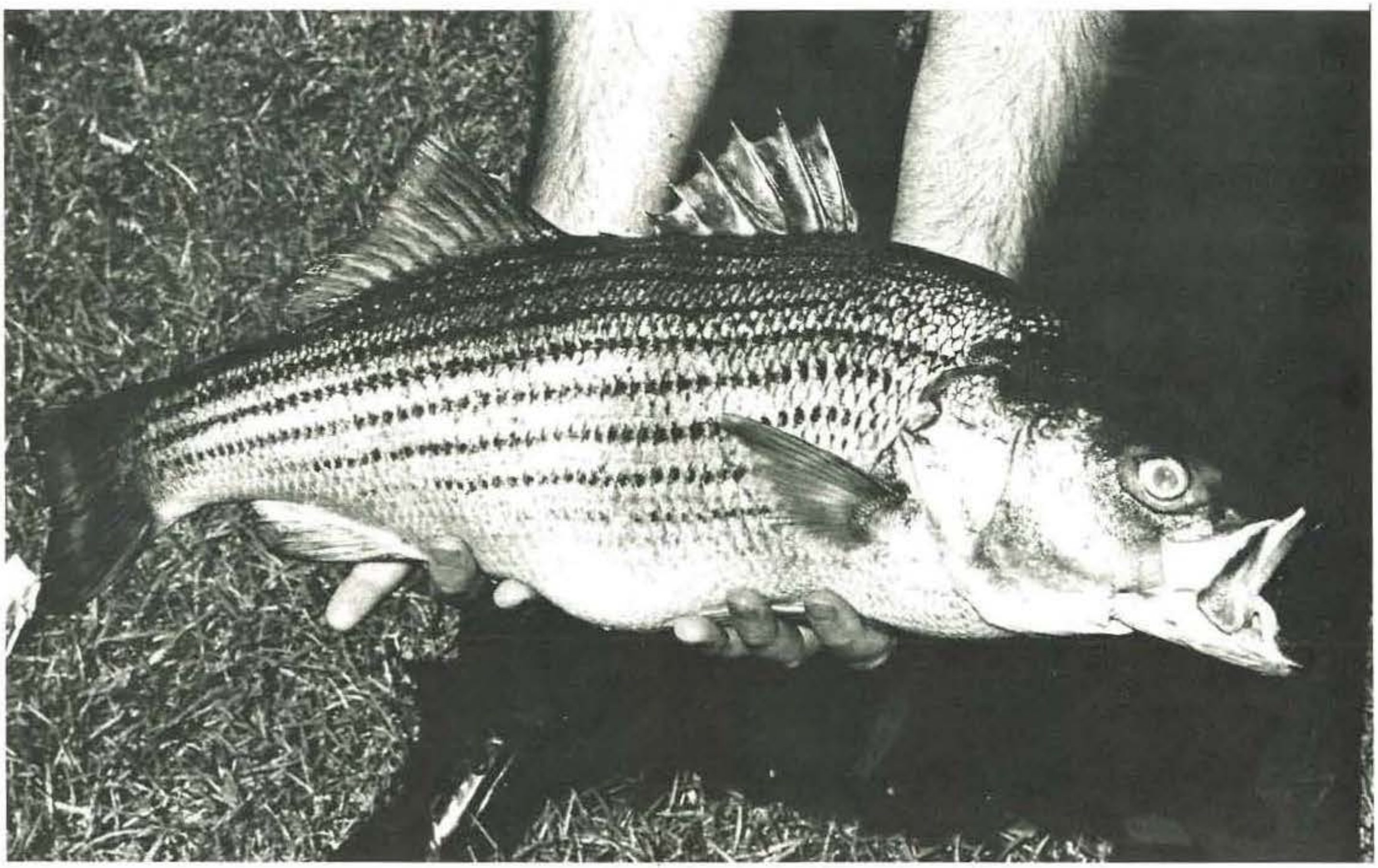


Photo By Laurence Rossignol

Photo By William A. Greer

**they're still learning about**

# Hot Fishing at Talquin

STRIPED BASS ARE top ranked sport and food fish, and the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has been stocking Lake Talquin with them since 1967. The *stocking* program has been highly successful. The reason for the stocking program is so you and I can catch striped bass. Our *catches* have not been as successful as the stocking program.

Now, let's explore the success—and the failure—of Talquin anglers in their efforts to tempt these finicky feeders to take their offerings.

Striped bass are big and plentiful in Lake Talquin. They are also big and plentiful below the Talquin Dam. Here the comparison ends. The differences in techniques and the differences in catches between these two areas is amazing.

Below the dam the fish are caught consistently. Fishermen experimenting with different methods over the past few years have come up with several successful ways to entice the wary stripers into striking.

The three anglers who are best known for bringing in outstanding catches from beneath the dam use three entirely different techniques.

Ed McCollum, of Tallahassee, uses live bait—shad, if there is a run on and he can catch good-sized ones with a dip net. However, the shad run up the river to the dam for only a few weeks out of every year, so most of the time Ed uses shiners for his live bait.

Ed's choice for tackle is an Ambassadeur reel and Browning rod. He rigs with no leader, a thin Number 2 or 3 wire hook, a split shot, and an egg sinker. The split shot is pinched on the line about a foot and a half above the hooks, and the egg sinker runs free above the shot. The size of the egg varies. Ed uses different weights to fish different depths until he finds at what depth the fish are feeding. Remember, the water is often flowing rapidly beneath the dam, a condition striped bass seem to prefer for feeding. A quarter-ounce lead may hold that live bait only a couple of feet beneath the surface in fast water. Or, a full ounce lead may take your bait to the bottom. Two feet down or on the bottom won't get the job done when the fish are feeding 6 feet beneath the surface. Ed, like so many good fishermen, keeps making changes, looking for the depth at which the fish are located.

The live bait is hooked through the lips. This allows Ed to repeatedly cast the bait up and across the current, working the bait back to him just as he would work a slow-moving artificial.

Ed McCollum is a most impressive fisherman to watch. He never stops working. He casts his shiner out from the east bank toward the dam and across the current. This is repeated a couple of dozen times. By now the shiner has expired and is replaced. Two dozen more casts, and the half-ounce lead is changed to a bigger one. Ed has figured it's time to try a new depth. He's always rerigging or rebaiting, or moving just a few feet to better work a slightly different spot. Ed also spends a lot of time removing big fat striped bass from his hook and putting them on his stringer.

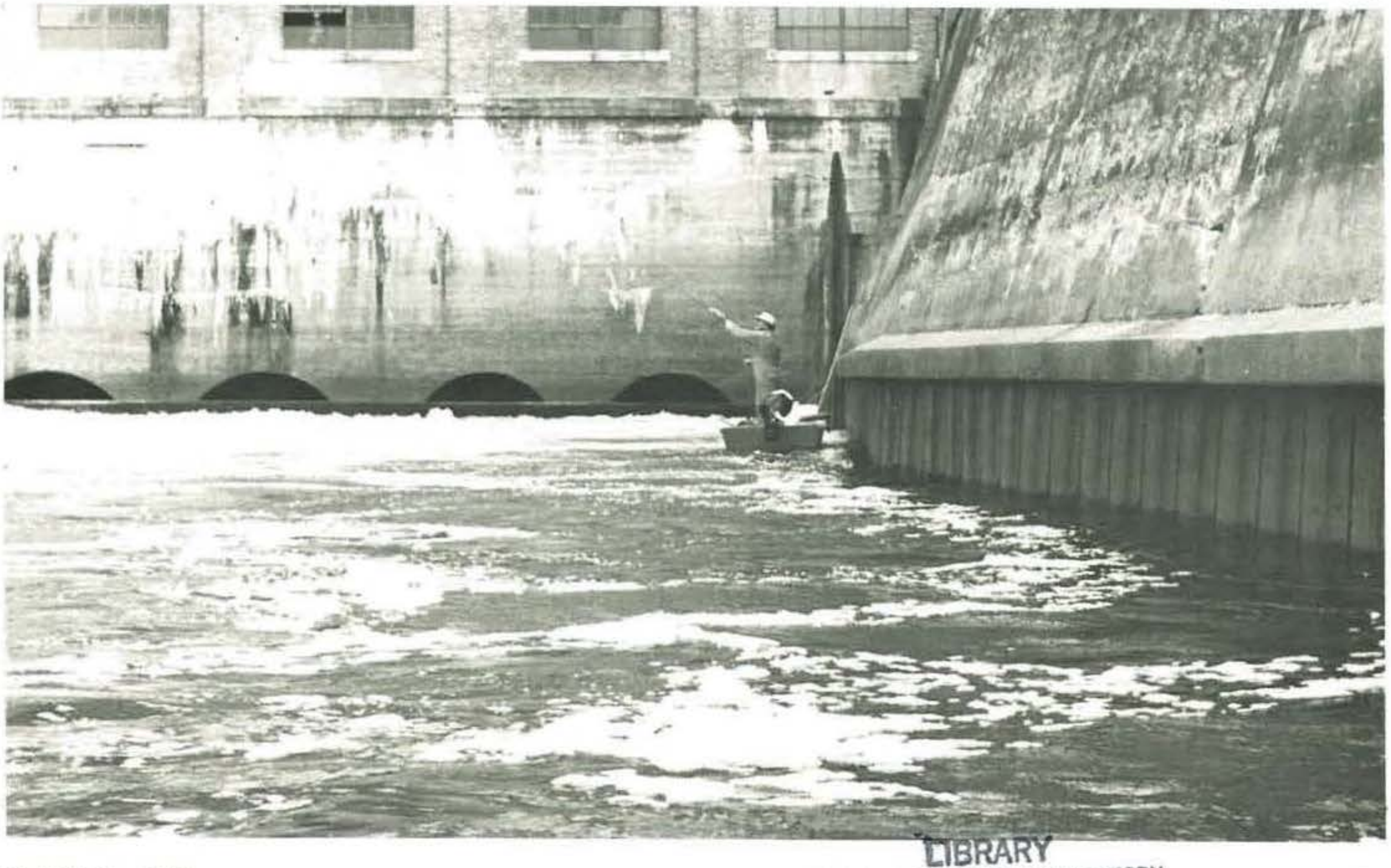
Two years ago, I was stuck up to the hubcaps in the sand of St. George Island. Along came a four-wheel drive vehicle with Tallahassean John Burgess at the wheel, and in just a minute I was yanked out of the sand and onto firm ground.

(*Continued on next page*)

**By HARLAN FRANKLIN**

**For anglers with the know-how and the knack, limit strings of largemouth bass and bonus stripers, left, are available in the lake and behind the dam in the fast tailrace waters below. Lake striped bass seem harder to find, but they are there—possibly up to 20 pounders, fishery biologists say.**

Photo By Harlan Franklin



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With the "stuck" problem solved, our thoughts and conversation naturally turned to fishing and fishing tackle.

Johnny and I were rummaging through my tackle box when his eyes fell on some big 4-inch Sting-Ray Grub tails Tom Mann had sent me to try out.

"I'll bet those stripers below the Talquin Dam will tear those white ones up," was Johnny's comment.

His remark surprised me. I associated grubs with salt water. Of course, striped bass are saltwater fish, but I had assumed they completely changed their ways of living when put in fresh water.

Well, fresh water stripers may have changed some, but Johnny soon convinced me the changes did not include the striped bass' willingness to hit jigs—plastic-tailed or buck-tailed.

"You fish the jig or grub about the same way Ed fishes his live bait. Throw up and a little across the current and work it back with little jerks. Sometimes they hit the smaller jigs right under the surface and sometimes right along the bottom," Johnny explained.

"You need every weight from a quarter-ounce to 1 ounce. As far as color goes, I like white best, but sometimes yellow does okay."

Johnny said his favorite bait was the white 1-ounce Sting-Ray Grub with a red head.

Then I asked him about his best day below the dam. "It was last April—the first week. I'd been casting for over 2 hours without a strike. Then, for the next 2 hours, I couldn't put a jig in the water without hooking a fish. Some were little—less than 2 pounds—several went better than 10, one was 14, and the rest between 5 and 10 pounds. The limit is six, but I only kept four fish. I don't know how many I caught. It must have been between 20 and 30. If I wasn't taking a fish off, I was fighting one. That was the most fun I ever had fishing."

Photo By Mike Flanagan

Photo By William A. Greer

Billy English is from Arlington, Georgia, and his favorite sport is catching striped bass with topwater plugs. His favorite plug is a Crazy Shad, but Bill feels any topwater plug with spinners will attract strikes. The Crazy Shad has spinners on both ends, while the Blabbermouth, another favorite, has one spinner on the rear end.

While Ed and Johnny do most of their fishing in the fastest part of the tailrace, near the dam, Billy prefers to work his topwater baits right at the end of the swift water, a little more than 100 feet from the dam.

"Fish where the foam is," Billy explained to me. "They seem to hit best where the streaks of foam first form on the surface. Keep your plug moving. You don't need to stop it like you do for largemouth bass. And work it quite a bit faster than you do for largemouth.

"The best time is when the gates are open and the water is moving pretty good. Be ready to fish at first light. If they hit, they'll start as soon as it gets daylight, and then usually keep hitting for about an hour. Sometimes they'll hit on top during the day, but not very often. The last hour of light is pretty good though," he noted.

Billy loves his striper fishing on topwater lures but seldom keeps any fish, and never keeps any under 5 pounds. He reasons the stripers grow at a rate of almost 3 pounds a year, and if he throws back a 5-pounder today, he will have the enjoyment of fighting a 10-pounder 2 years from now.

These three anglers are very successful striped bass fishermen. Each has his favorite technique, and it works for him.

Above the dam, in Lake Talquin, things are completely different. Here, we could find no fishermen who caught stripers with any consistency.

Here striped bass are caught occasionally by fishermen who are after largemouth. Either nobody fishes for stripers, or nobody fishing for them is talking.

The latter may be true. There are rumors about a couple of fishermen who consistently catch big strings of striped bass, but nobody seems to know who these people are or how they catch their fish.

It's common practice for many successful fishermen to be close-mouthed. In this case, silence can kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

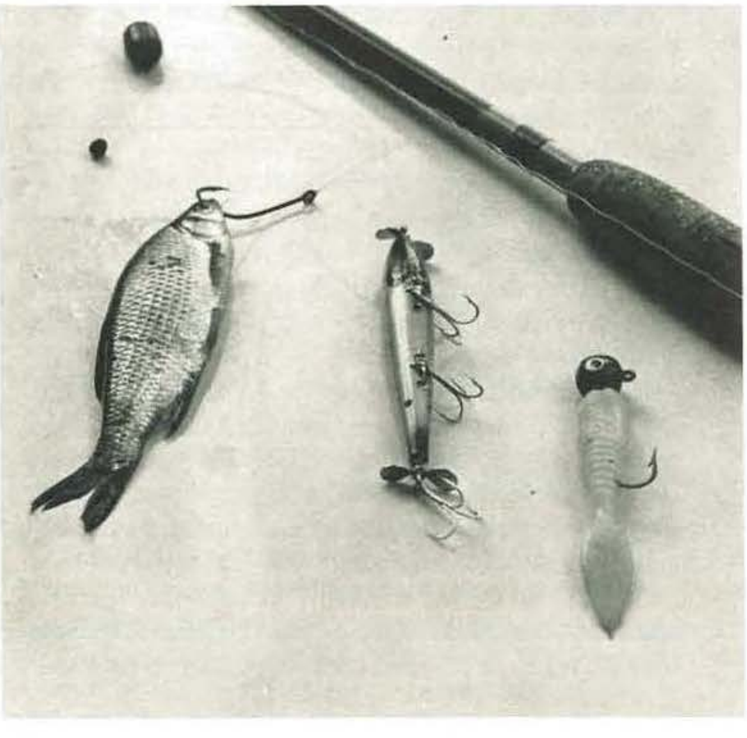
The Game and Fish people put those striped bass in Lake Talquin for the primary purpose of improving sport fishing. If they are not being caught, then the Commission will likely devote their future efforts somewhere else.

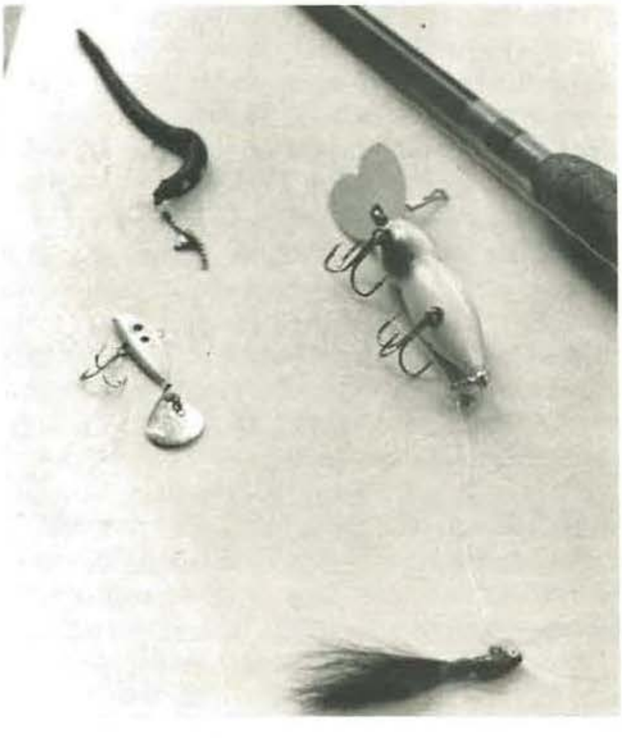
We talked to Jerry Banks, Assistant Chief of

*(Continued on next page)*

**School black bass often have stripers mixed in, as catch in top left photo shows; three fish in foreground are stripers. Haul of 11 linesides, left, was made in April at mouth of Little River. The fish hit Bomber "Speed Shad." Notice how Ed McCollum, right, holds the rod tip aloft to keep bait above snags. Three standbys for river stripers are, from left to right, below, shiner, "Devil Horse" with spinners, and White Grub. Then "Little George," black worm, and "Hellbender" with trailing jig are the most highly recommended lures for lake fishing for striped bass.**

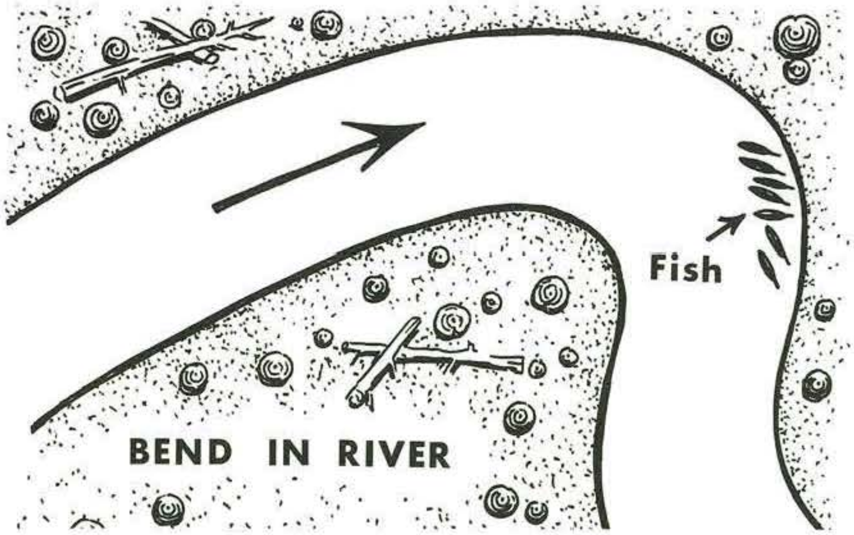
Photos By Harlan Franklin

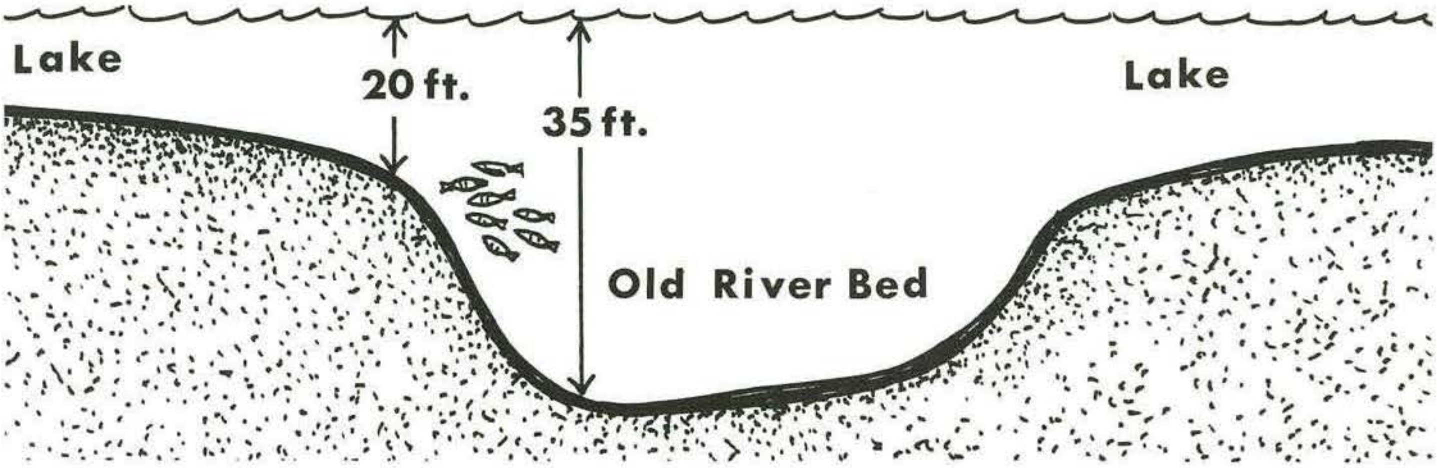




**Old river bed is good striped bass territory in Talquin. Look for the stripers on down-current side of bends around channel dropoffs, as shown in these illustrations.**

Drawings By Wallace Hughes





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the Fisheries Division of the Commission, Tallahassee, and with Dewey Andrews and Truman Moore, both local tackle dealers, well known for their fishing ability and knowledge. Between these three, we came up with some solid suggestions that could pay off big in fishing the lake.

The stripers in the lake have a tendency to stay in or near the old river bed or in a creek bed going into the river bed. They also appear to like the down-current portion of river bends, especially where the top of the river bed is 20 feet beneath the surface and the bottom is 35 feet down.

Trolling or casting these areas should catch stripers—if you have the right lure, and if you can get it down to where the fish are.

The Santee-Cooper Reservoir in South Carolina has been famous for its striped bass fishing for years. There, too, the fish seem to congregate along the old river bed.

Santee-Cooper fishing guides have developed a technique for trolling a bait down deep. They use a Hellbender lure with a bucktail jig tied a couple of feet behind the plug with monofilament. The favorite jig is the No-Alibi.

The Hellbender is a deep-running plug. It gets the jig down to where the fish are. At Santee-Cooper, most of the fish are caught on the jig, but every now and then one hits the plug.

The Hellbender actually serves three purposes. It acts as a deep planer, a teaser, and a lure. The No-Alibi trailing behind serves as the *pièce de résistance.*

Another bait figured to produce is an 8-inch black worm on a Number 3 hook, rigged on a one-sixteenth-ounce Pomponette bead chain. This, worked along the edge of the river bed, just might turn those reluctant Talquin stripers on.

When the lake was lowered this winter, largemouth bass fishermen using Little George artificials caught quite a few stripers. It may be that the Little George will turn out to be a good striper catcher. Especially if it is fished down deep where the fish are.

It's a real challenge—knowing Lake Talquin is loaded with striped bass weighing as much as 16 pounds. And knowing all those other guys haven't been able to catch them yet. And also knowing striped bass are voracious fish known for striking artificials with much vigor and enthusiasm.

At the rate the Talquin stripers are growing, somebody ought to start catching them. Otherwise, they'll take over the lake. Or maybe all north Florida! ●

# Reducing Recoil

**some big game rifles kick more than others of the same caliber—for many factors are involved—but there are ways to lessen the problem**

By EDMUND McLAURIN

Most hunters hunt handicapped. They walk too fast or too noisily; they look for game only superficially; they talk or call to one another; they become restless when they should "stay put," and a great many simply lack the ability to hit the mark when they have a chance to bag game. They are handicapped because they let themselves be.

I save my admiration for hunters who demonstrate that they can hunt and shoot expertly despite some physical handicap, simply through a common sense approach to their limitations, and adoption of good operating techniques.

Before he moved to California, I shot trap regularly with a friend who had only one arm. The way he expertly handled his Remington Model 1100 autoloader was a lesson in developed technique and coordination. His scores were never anything to apologize for, either. In fact, he frequently outshot more able-bodied rivals.

To load, he would squat down on the firing line, his shotgun across his knees. When ready to shoot, he called for his target, awaited its appearance, then stood, shouldered, and pointed his gun in one fast, fluid motion.

Even a person confined to a wheelchair can enjoy shooting, given a gun and load he can control and shoot with confidence.

At the local gun club, a shotgunner in a wheelchair fires with notable skill at trap-thrown clay pigeons. Experience has taught him exactly how to position his chair for the most advantageous gun swing arc before calling "Pull!"

Many hunters handicap themselves by using a rifle or shotgun of too heavy recoil for their tolerance, and tend to flinch when firing, in fearful anticipation of the jolt they're about to get.

Jack O'Connor, well-known for his numerous books on shooting, and his long tenure as gun editor of Outdoor Life, succinctly summed up recoil with the words, "Recoil increases as either velocity or weight of the shot charge is increased, provided the same gun is used in making the comparisons.

"The lighter the gun, the more the kick; the heavier the bullet, the more kick; the shorter the barrel, the more kick."

He could have gone on and said that when several of these recoil factors are present at once, the gun being fired is apt to be a real shoulder bruiser.

The kick of a gun of known weight and established ammunition loading is technically expressed as "free recoil in foot-pounds." For a 12 gauge shotgun of average weight, it figures some 24 to 32 foot-pounds, depending on shell load; around 26.7 foot-pounds of free recoil for a 7mm Magnum big game rifle and usually chosen 175 grain bullet weight; close to 19 ft.-lb. of free recoil from a 30-06 loaded with 220 grain bullet traveling at 2,400 feet per second when it clears the muzzle; and approximately 15 foot-pounds of recoil from a .270 firing a 130 grain bullet making close to 3,140 feet per second at the muzzle. Similarly, the .35 Remington caliber and 200 grain bullet weight develops about 13 foot-pounds, and the .300 Savage caliber with 150 grain bullet about 11.5 foot-pounds.

How much or how little firing recoil the shooter feels depends primarily on the caliber or gauge used, the gun weight and balance, and the load fired.

Other factors influencing recoil felt at the shoulder includes straightness of stock, and how the rifle or shot gun is held, shouldered, and cheeked.

A hunter who must carefully watch the recoil factor because of possible shock damage to a weakened heart or a detached retina condition can still hunt deer and other thin-skinned game if he uses a rifle caliber of relatively mild recoil—like the .243 Winchester, 6mm Remington, or the .257 Roberts (*not* the .257 Magnum!)—and then shoots only such game as can be reliably and humanely killed within the chosen caliber's limitations. All of those just named are of 6mm classification.

The shooter who has good reason to fear possible injury from recoil should certainly avoid firing such hard kickers as lightweight 12 gauge shotguns firing heavy loads, rifles like the big European .577 and .600 caliber doubles, popular for African big game hunting, and American rifles chambered for the .460 Weatherby Magnum, .458 Winchester, .375 Magnum, .358 Norma Magnum, 7mm Magnum, and .348 Winchester calibers. Add short barrel 12 gauge shotguns firing rifled slugs.

(*Continued on next page*)

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It is when selection is made of a hunting rifle caliber larger than one of 6mm class that recoil generally increases markedly. Even so, a slightly larger caliber selection can be made if the increased recoil is counterbalanced by such additions as muzzle brake and thick recoil pad.

If I wanted to keep recoil to the absolute minimum, for medical or other reasons, and still enjoy a hunting rifle capable of bagging a variety of big game, I would choose a .270 caliber and then attempt to reduce its already moderate recoil by every mechanical means, including an installed muzzle brake, a fairly heavy and straight stock, a shotgun-type Pachmayr rubber recoil pad, and a hunting coat well padded at the shooting shoulder.

The .270 is a true 7mm, fires bullets of stabilizing sectional density, gives flat bullet trajectory, and packs punch to point of distant target, yet has considerably less firing recoil than a 7mm Magnum, and less than either the .30-06 or .308 calibers. Used carefully, the .270 caliber will take any big game species found in the United States and Canada.

For an all-around shotgun, I would initially select an already mild recoiling Remington Model 1100 in 20 gauge, with addition of a ventilated choke control sleeve on the muzzle and a thick Pachmayr recoil pad.

My hunting coat would have twin shoulder pads (for appearance), but with the pad on shooting shoulder side of double-thickness for maximum cushioning. Installation of a good muzzle brake on a hunting rifle is practical. Brakes can be had under brand names like Johnson, Herter, Kickmaster, Sha-Cul, Contra-Jet, Dahl, Pendleton De-Kicker, and "The Streamline," to name a few better-knowns.

In usual form, a muzzle brake is a slotted or perforated gas chamber attached to the rifle muzzle, or created by venting the barrel close to the muzzle. Those of installed sleeve-type are larger than the rifle's bore, to permit free passage of bullets through the attachment. Where such a muzzle brake is selected, the attachment must be of correct dimensions and overall length, as required by caliber and bullet velocity.

"The Streamline" muzzle brake patent calls for porting the rifle barrel close to the muzzle, by drilling a series of proper size gas vent holes in the barrel itself, or by optional attachment of a perforated sleeve of the same design and working principle. The model has earned a good reputation. Not only is recoil markedly reduced, but there is less disconcerting muzzle jump from first firing, if a fast follow-up shot must be accurately made, users of "The Streamline" invariably report.

For some big game calibers a short length brake of correct dimensions and gas escape design will often prove more efficient than a longer brake. For such calibers, the Dahl and Herter units are frequent choices.

The important thing is that a brake give maximum braking effect without the lighter, high pressure powder gases getting around and ahead of the heavier bullet, for introduced rocketlike kickback. Such kickback invariably develops and adds itself to firing recoil—reducing braking effect —if the gas chamber is too long and is incorrect in number and placement of gas vents.

For the technical reasons given, fitting or drilling of a muzzle brake should be entrusted only to a gunsmith who understands a muzzle brake's working principle in specific relation to the caliber and average bullet velocity of the rifle to which the reduction feature is being added.

Most muzzle brakes work best with rifles of high velocity. A good one of practical design and proper installation can be expected to reduce normal firing recoil by at least 30%—and that holds true for the Magnum calibers too. Although it reduces firing recoil for the shooter, the average muzzle brake accentuates noise blast of firing. It is something to which you must become accustomed, even though your shooting buddies may never accept such firing blast as normal.

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Whether weapon choice is gun or bow, hunting is a fascinating sport. Enjoyment is not simply tied in with game kills, but with interesting sights, findings, and experiences that are never forgotten.

This season, while hunting with my cousin, Dr. Wilbur McL. Davis, in the palm hammock and grassy plains sections of Florida, some 12 to 16 miles west of Cape Canaveral, I chanced on a spot where natural erosion had exposed the subsurface for a considerable depth.

Embedded in the lower sides of the well-washed gully, as well as scattered along its floor, were numerous broken and intact shells of ancient marine animals—primarily those of conchs and different kinds of bivalves. Most of the conchs were broken in one or more places, and the once connected halves of the bivalves had been separated long ago by the ravages of time and environment.

But most interesting was the find of a large, intact, and quite heavy clam specimen about the size of a man's two clenched fists, flat sides placed together. This ancient bivalve had been bleached by sun and was surface-worn and eroded by countless rains, but it was still intact, its halves fused together as if welded. The fossil's weight made me curious as to its inner content, which I imagined to be preserved in a petrified state. Final decision, however, was not to spoil the intact find by forcibly separating the shell halves to satisfy curiosity.

Since the place of discovery is miles distant from the ocean, my cousin and I wondered about the probable age of the fossilized find, and its life-stage geologic period. My return home was followed by a prompt visit to the local public library, for research. The reference books' findings are worthy of report here.

First, let's agree that present-age Florida can be considered to be relatively flat, without any great land rise above sea level. Even so, its subsurface geologic layer formations vary in their thicknesses. A particular section of the peninsula, although equal in geologic age with close neighbor sections, may possess a thicker earth layer for the same number of represented years. A color plate in one of the reference books showed strata differences by location and color-coded shadings.

The layers of Florida earth begin—as we know Florida—with sand, then generally unseen terrace deposits, followed by alluvial-level deposits, before really deep substrata occur.

The gully's depth characteristics and orientation with the library reference book's color-coded map of Florida's earth strata would normally place the big clam's once-active life stage at sometime during the period corresponding to the formation of the alluvial stratum.

Timewise, the alluvial stratum of Florida subsoil is supposed to embrace the Pleistocene period and at least a portion of the earlier Pliocene period of earth's history. The first includes early man. (We are of the Holocene age of North American history, if you are touchy about general reference to your ancestry!)

Since present-day borings show that shells of ancient marine animals begin to show up at earth-layer depths coinciding with that of the Pliocene period, it is not illogical to assume that the shells and intact clam my cousin and I found could be of this period. (We had guessed specimen ages as possibly being between 8,000 and 14,000 years. According to the reference texts, we were wrong.)

Established by lead-uranium ratios, the Pliocene and successive Pleistocene period have been dated as occurring millions of years ago! I couldn't buy that as the likely age of the fossilized clam. I checked reference books information against a Geologic Time and Earth-layer Formation Chart, on Page 949 of Webster's Third International Dictionary, 1961 edition. It established embracing years of the Pliocene age and the succeeding Pleistocene age. Even if the clam had lived during the later history of the Pleistocene period, it was a very long time ago!

I recall that when we found the big clam, I remarked to my cousin that I wished I could hunt for the number of years equal to the existence of the fossilized clam, and be given modern weapons and ammunition of inexhaustible supply; even undergo physical throwback to the clam's time of life. But I was thinking in terms of some 8,000 years—not a million or more.

How did the clam and other sea fossils find a resting place 12 to 16 miles from the ocean? Other forms of sea shells found with the fossilized clam are conchs and bivalves, likely too small to have been collected as food and carried to the spot by some ancient Florida resident. Besides, fossils were scattered the length and depth of the wash.

Contact with Ray Robinson, president of the Suncoast Archaeological Society, resulted in some interesting as well as surprising archaeological concepts. Right away, Mr. Robinson told me that the fossilized clam find was likely in its final natural resting place, with its life stage dating back anywhere from 5 million to 40 million years. Such finds are not uncommon, he said, and added that the depth at which a fossil is found is not always reliable as an age dating factor, due to variances in subsoil formation thicknesses in different sections of Florida, even where such earth layer deposits are of the same age. He told me that Florida was first formed as an island some 40 million years ago, in the Cretaceous period of geologic history, with the Gulf Hammock area the first exposed land. Much of the land of east Florida was connected originally to a mainland continent mass which formed the Florida peninsula some 5 million years ago, during the Pliocene, or Ice Age. At that time, Canada and most of the northern United States had a mile-thick layer of ice. In contrast, Florida was far more temperate. The Florida coastline changed repeatedly as the northern ice sheet melted and reformed itself several times before its final melting. Florida was once twice its present size, with much of the area exposed which is now covered by the Gulf of Mexico. Final melting of the ice sheet that covered more northern latitudes caused a rise in sea level, and inundation of what was formerly exposed Florida land.

Connection of the original island with the mainland continent brought about an influx of animal life. Vicious bears, wolves, and even saber-toothed tigers, populated the swampy Florida wilds. Wildlife soon became abundant, on land and in bordering waters. Some forms have come down to us relatively unchanged through the ages. The shark is a specific example.

It would be interesting to hear from readers with a Florida archaeological background, expressing qualified opinions relative to the large clam fossil and the enduring shells of various conchs and bivalves. Perhaps some reader is in a professional position to make a carbon-dating test of the fossilized clam, to establish age beyond all conjecture.

Somehow, I feel there is a bigger story behind this one. ●

# CONSERVATION SCENE

## Louwana Fund Contribution

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT and research received a welcome boost last year as the New York based Louwana Fund, Inc., contributed $7,500 to the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission's wildlife island project, according to Everglades Regional Manager, Major Louis F. Gainey, West Palm Beach.

Fernanda Munn Kellog, president of the conservation oriented, nonprofit organization, recently noted the benefits to wildlife already accrued through the program of developing raised areas in the Florida Everglades where deer and other animals could gain refuge from high water, while the accompanying borrow pits which supplied the original island substance provide water holes during dry periods.

According to Mrs. Kellog, the Louwana Fund is dedicated to the conservation and scientific study of wildlife the world over. It gives assistance to national parks and game departments toward projects involving wildlife protection, research and management.

A prior effort of the Fund and the Florida Game Commission was the construction of Lake Louwana, in central Florida, where extensive fish management projects have been undertaken.

Other activities of the Louwana Fund include donations of anti-poaching units, aircraft, tractors, and money for game management projects in Kenya, Africa.

## 1973 Conservation Yearbook

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR has just announced publication of IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE, the ninth volume of its award-winning Conservation Yearbook Series.

Published in full color with more than 200 photographs, 60 articles, and an introduction by Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, the 1973 Yearbook dramatically portrays contributions to conservation and service to people.

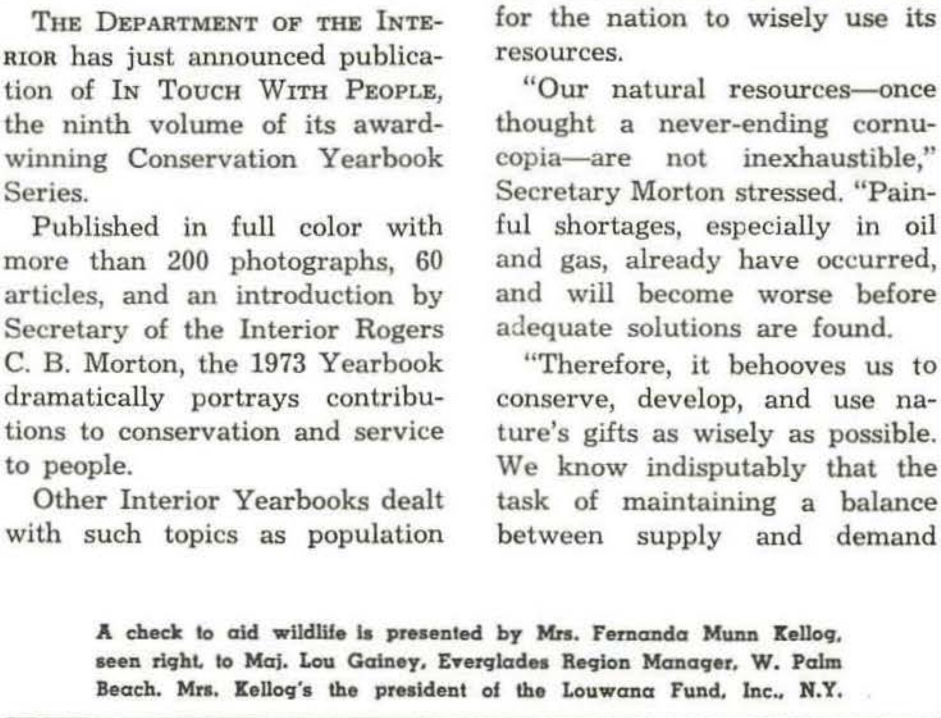
Other Interior Yearbooks dealt with such topics as population growth, the destiny of man, water, and land. The latest publication tells of Interior's relationships with individuals and groups of people, and its performance on behalf of conservation.

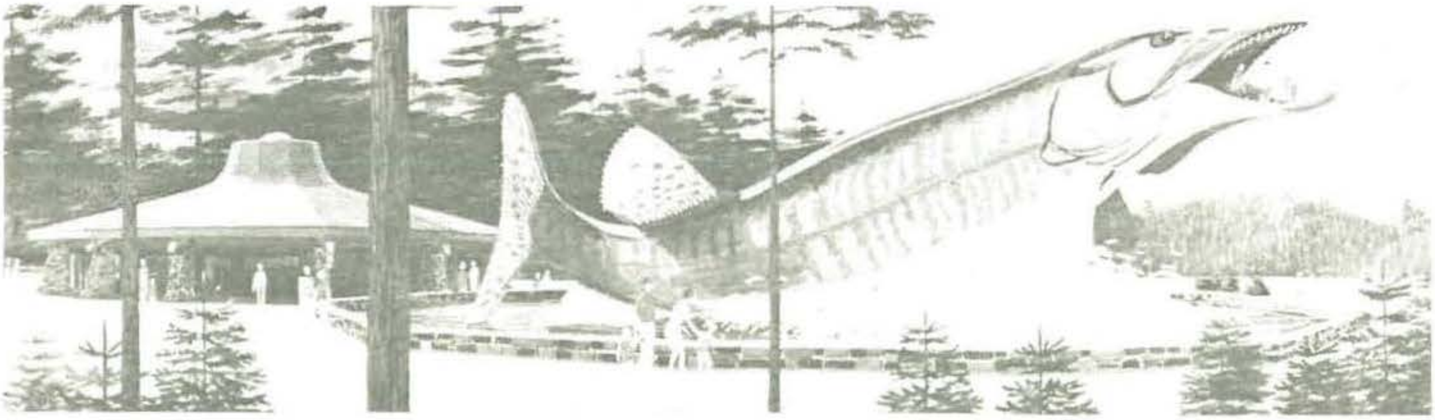
In his introduction, "People Are Our Future," Secretary Morton emphasizes protection of the environment and the need for the nation to wisely use its resources.

"Our natural resources—once thought a never-ending cornucopia—are not inexhaustible," Secretary Morton stressed. "Painful shortages, especially in oil and gas, already have occurred, and will become worse before adequate solutions are found.

"Therefore, it behooves us to conserve, develop, and use nature's gifts as wisely as possible. We know indisputably that the task of maintaining a balance between supply and demand

**A check to aid wildlife is presented by Mrs. Fernanda Munn Kellog, seen right, to Maj. Lou Gainey, Everglades Region Manager, W. Palm Beach. Mrs. Kellog's the president of the Louwana Fund, Inc., N.Y.**





Proposed National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame, Hayward, Wisconsin

grows more difficult each passing year.

"We live in a single, interdependent biosphere where the flora and fauna, air and water, land and other resources must be carefully attended to maintain the balance of Earth's fabulous natural mechanism."

The large (9" x 12") full-color yearbook, IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE, is available for $4.45 from the Manager, Public Documents Distribution Center, Pueblo, Colorado 81009. Its identification number is S/N 2400-00792.

### *Fishing Hall of Fame*

A NATIONWIDE SEARCH for antique and historical fishing tackle and gear has been launched by the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame.

Executive Director Steve Henry stated the Fishing Hall of Fame "is on the lookout for older and significant fishing items for possible placement in our museum." Such items as rods and reels, lures, motors, tackle boxes, and other articles related to the sport of fishing are being sought by the Founders Committee.

The Fishing Hall of Fame will be located in Hayward, Wisconsin, home of several state and world record fish. Ground breaking for the one million dollar edifice and museum is tentatively scheduled for this spring.

The nonprofit complex will be an impressive one. It will consist of two structures—one an information and display center; the other a 5-story high structure designed in the likeness of a huge muskie "breaking water."

Displays of record fish catches and stories of fishing feats will highlight the Fishing Hall of Fame. A special section will be devoted to "enshrined" Hall of Fame members.

As to the items being sought by the Founders Committee, Henry commented that "persons possessing items related to the sport of fishing should contact the Fishing Hall of Fame directly and describe what they have." He pointed out that significant items will be permanently displayed while others will be placed on a rotating basis, providing, of course, that the owners will make the items available to the Fishing Hall of Fame.

Proper credit will be given to all donors. Items placed on display will contain the owner's name and address.

The Fishing Hall of Fame is also seeking mounted displays of record fish catches, unusual fish mounts, and the stories and pictures surrounding such catches.

All information should be directed to:

National Fresh Water Fishing
Hall of Fame
Box 99
Hayward, Wisconsin 54843

### *USDA Land Report*

ABOUT 80 PERCENT of the more than 2 billion acres of land in the United States is used for crops, pasture, and forestry, according to a report released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service.

The report, based on data from the 1969 Census, USDA agencies, and other sources, shows that one-fifth of the total area is devoted to crops, more than one-fourth is permanent grassland pasture, and one-third is forest land. The rest is distributed among urban and transportation uses (less than 3 percent); recreational, wildlife, and other extensive special uses (5 percent); and unclassified areas including Alaskan tundra (13 percent).

In recent decades, there has been little change in the distribution of land among major agricultural and forestry uses. Acreages of both cropland and permanent grassland declined slightly, prior to 1973's cropland increase. However, total production, thanks to rising yields, increased significantly. Forest land area has held almost stable nationally, as losses to agricultural, urban, and other uses in some regions have been largely offset by reversion of open land to forest in other regions.

Special uses of land, particularly urban and recreational uses, continue to expand at the expense of agricultural and forestry uses. However, the special uses represent a small and slowly

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increasing share. Use for urban expansion, highways, roads, airports, and reservoirs, for example, requires an additional 1.2 million acres of land a year.

Three-fifths of the land, and nearly all the more valuable acreage, is privately owned. State, Federal, and local governments own the rest.

Copies of the report, "Major Uses of Land in the United States: Summary for 1969," AER 247, are available on request by telephone (202) 447-7255 or post card from Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please include Zip Code.

### *Southern Game Atlas*

HOW MANY DEER HUNTERS looking for their buck each season wonder in just what counties are the most deer killed?

How many hunters out for doves wonder where populations are thickest—and if they are on the upswing or going down?

And how many landowners wanting to encourage bobwhite quail wonder what they can plant or leave along the fencerow to encourage nesting? And what are the best food plants for quail?

An ATLAS OF SOUTHERN FOREST GAME, published by the Southern Forest Experiment Station, answers these queries and more. The 24-page booklet presents information about distribution of important game animals that find their food and cover in the 200 million acres of southern forests. It shows trends in populations, where game kills are highest, and locations of public hunting areas. It describes habitat requirements and possible habitat improvements for various species, including some migratory birds that winter in the South.

Copies of the atlas are available from the Southern Forest Experiment Station, 701 Loyola Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70113.

### *New Hunter Training Film*

A NEW 16MM COLOR FILM aimed at helping with youth hunter training programs is available, according to the Wildlife Management Institute.

The 25-minute film answers questions of the non-hunter concerning conservation of both game and non-game wildlife. Instruction is provided by examples of hunters in the film. Information on obtaining a copy is available from the Extension Division, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas 66506.

### *Hunters' Harvest 1972*

ACCORDING TO PROFESSOR Sidney W. Wilcox of Arizona State University, during the 1972 season hunters harvested 2,105,123 deer in the United States. The 1972 harvest yielded 107,303,431 pounds of boneless meat providing millions of Americans with food for the family table. And, while no sportsman would equate the value of hunting with meat and money, that much venison valued at the retail price for chuck beef—about $1.20 a pound in most areas of the country—would be worth nearly $120 million at any supermarket.

The 1972 report on deer production is the fourth such study published by Wilcox, a professor of engineering communication at Arizona State. All data in the report represents the best available information from professional game management people in each of the 50 states.

The deer harvest can be repeated every year without reducing the surviving deer population from one year to the next. Through scientific wildlife management, our herds are maintained as renewable resources. There are now some 15 million deer in the United States. In 1900, there were only 500,000.

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# FLORIDA WILDLIFE'S
# FISHING CITATION

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**
**SPECIES**

| | |
|---|---|
| LARGEMOUTH BASS | 8 pounds or larger |
| CHAIN PICKEREL | 4 pounds or larger |
| BLUEGILL (BREAM) | 1½ pounds or larger |
| SHELLCRACKER | 2 pounds or larger |
| BLACK CRAPPIE | 2 pounds or larger |
| RED BREAST | 1 pound or larger |

All fish must be taken from the fresh waters of the state of Florida, as defined by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Fish must be caught on conventional fishing tackle, with artificial or live bait, in the presence of at least one witness.

The catch must be weighed and recorded at a fishing camp or tackle store within the state by the owner, manager, or an authorized agent of the respective establishment.

is available without charge, to any and all subscribers to Florida Wildlife Magazine, and their immediate families, who catch any of the fresh-water game fish of the prescribed species and size requirements. Citation, showing recorded date of the catch, will be mailed to the applicant upon receipt of the following application form that has been properly filled out and signed.

Only fishing citation applications received within 90 days from date of catch will be honored.

### APPLICATION FOR FLORIDA WILDLIFE FISHING CITATION

The Editor, FLORIDA WILDLIFE Date__________
Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Fla.

Please send me the Florida Wildlife Fishing Citation with the inscribed data listed below:

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Species__________ Weight__________ Length__________

Type of Tackle__________

Bait or Lure Used__________

Where Caught__________ in__________ County

Date Caught__________ Catch Witnessed By__________

Registered, Weighed By__________ At__________

Signature of Applicant__________

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